



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**National Cemetery Administration**  
**Cemetery Development & Improvement Service**  
**575 North Pennsylvania Street, Suite 495**  
**Indianapolis, IN 46204**

August 27, 2020

Julie Friebele  
Village Administrator  
Village of Elwood  
401 E. Mississippi Avenue  
Elwood, IL 60421

Subject: Potential Bridge over State Highway IL-53 on Walter Strawn Drive

Ms. Friebele,

The VA National Cemetery Administration (NCA) honors Veterans and their eligible family members with final resting places in national shrines and with lasting tributes that commemorate their service and sacrifice to our Nation. Located in Elwood, IL, Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery (ALNC) serves over 412,000 Veterans in the Chicago area. Since opening in 1999, ALNC has buried over 58,000 Veterans and family members, and expects to continue to provide this proud service for over the next 100 years. As a customer service organization with a focus on the customer experience, we strive to ensure our Veterans and their families are treated with dignity, honor, and respect.

I am writing to you to formally express concerns about a potential new bridge project that is being considered on Walter Strawn Drive crossing over State Highway IL-53 in support of a new trucking depot project "Compass Business Park" in the vicinity of both ALNC and the Village of Elwood. NCA is highly concerned that this potential bridge project will have substantial adverse impacts to the national cemetery and its customers, specifically:

Concern #1: It is VA's understanding that Compass Business Park will increase the East-West truck traffic on Walter Strawn Drive by 3,000 to 5,000+ semi-trailer trucks per day. This truck traffic on Walter Strawn Drive will substantially increase the daily risk of trucks that try to illegally come through the ALNC back gate entrance at Walter Strawn Drive and Diagonal Road intersection. VA is concerned that truck drivers will view the cemetery gates at Walter Strawn Drive and Diagonal Road intersection as a "shortcut" back to IL-53.

Concern #2: A bridge over IL-53 on Walter Strawn Drive may cause confusion to truckers trying to reach the Compass Business Park by driving southbound on IL-53. Once southbound trucks on IL-53 realize that they are passing under the bridge and cannot gain access to Compass Business Park from IL-53, their first inclination will be to turn west onto Hoff Road in an effort to use Hoff and Diagonal Roads as a "shortcut" back to Walter Strawn Drive and the bridge. This situation could substantially increase the daily risk of trucks that try to illegally come through the ALNC property on Hoff and Diagonal Roads. This situation already occurs at

ALNC on a weekly basis. During business hours alone, four to five trucks per week are flagged down by ALNC employees and turned around.

Concern #3: ALNC is currently in the design phase of a major expansion project at the cemetery that includes a secondary cemetery exit for visitors onto Walter Strawn Drive. Compass Business Park is expected to produce an increase in traffic on Walter Strawn Drive by 3,000 to 5,000+ trucks daily that could result in substantially increased traffic safety risks for the many elderly visitors that will be trying to safely exit their vehicles westbound onto Walter Strawn Drive.

Concern #4: The Developer has discussed possible installation of a truck turnaround on VA-owned property along Hoff Road near the front entrance of ALNC. VA is concerned that doing so will further encourage truck traffic on IL-53 to turn westbound onto Hoff Road to use the truck turnaround feature. The turnaround could substantially increase unwanted truck interactions with the daily cemetery visitor vehicle traffic, and further exacerbate unwanted traffic congestion and safety issues between cemetery visitor vehicles and trucks on Hoff Road. VA has strong concerns about any traffic features that would encourage trucks to turn Westbound from IL-53 onto Hoff Road, and does not intend to authorize a turnaround on VA property due to these concerns.

Concern #5: The 3,000 to 5,000+ daily increase in trucks on Walter Strawn Drive will substantially increase environmental background truck traffic noise within ALNC, thereby adversely impacting the visitor experience and the ability for visitors to partake in peaceful reflection within the solemn grounds of the national shrine facility. VA does not support increased noise levels within ALNC because it will detract from the visitor experience.

NCA greatly appreciates the partnership we have had with Village of Elwood, and the positive relationship that has been established and maintained over many years. Please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED] with any questions.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Glenn D. Madderom  
Chief, Cemetery Development & Improvement Service

CC:Sen. Richard Durbin  
Sen. Tammy Duckworth  
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Ms. Diane Sewing, Jackson Township Supervisor

Mr. Jeff L. Ronaldson, Director of Transportation, County Engineer, Will County Division of Transportation

Mr. Tom George, Director of Development, Northpoint Development