

## (April 20, 2007) US 30 Gets Some Love

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While New Lenox, Mokena and Frankfort have boomed during the past 15 years, U.S. 30 remains the same - an antiquated two-lane road, overburdened by traffic from upscale subdivisions and big-box retailers.

Relief is on the way, finally.

The widening of the road through the Lincoln-Way communities received a huge boost Thursday when the Illinois Department of Transportation included \$23.3 million for the project in its multiyear construction schedule. The money will pay for upgrading several intersections and buying land to add lanes along 5½ miles.

"It's great news," said Andy Fuller, an aide to U.S. Rep. Jerry Weller (R-11th), of Morris.

What remains is finding the money to pay for adding a lane in each direction between William Street in New Lenox and LaGrange Road in Frankfort, a project pegged at \$45 million a year ago.

But state Rep. Renee Kosel (R-New Lenox), a longtime supporter of U.S. 30 improvements, said she expects the General Assembly to pass an infrastructure bill this spring to finish the work.

"It will be at the 11th hour (of the session)," Kosel said. "This is extremely encouraging."

She said construction could start as soon as next year.

At \$10.9 billion, IDOT's road program covers road and bridge improvements statewide from 2008 to 2013. The highlights include:

- \$4 million for widening Interstate 55 from Weber Road to Interstate 80 in Will County.
- \$56 million for resurfacing the Bishop Ford Freeway from Martin Luther King Drive to U.S. 6.
- \$48 million for landscaping and other aesthetic features to the new-and-improved Dan Ryan Expressway.
- \$2.9 million for planning and designing the widening of LaGrange Road between 131st and 179th streets in Orland Park.

Missing from previous plans are the monster projects, such as overhauls to the Kingery and Dan Ryan expressways, which were financed by the expired \$12 billion Illinois FIRST program. Dozens of cheaper projects to local streets are filling the void.

"It is more of a maintenance program," acting IDOT chief Milton Sees said.

U.S. Rep. Daniel Lipinski (D-3rd), of Chicago, said he's pleased that IDOT increased the funding for a Central Avenue bypass on the Southwest Side to \$105 million, roughly half of the project's estimated cost.

"This is a good step forward," Lipinski said. "Yet there is still more work that needs to be done."

IDOT officials said the six-year program could grow to \$13.9 billion if state lawmakers pass Gov. Rod Blagojevich's plan to increase taxes on businesses.