

Widening project advances

Route 47 campaign gets \$1 mil in funds for final engineering

By JEFF KOLKEY
The Northwest Herald

HUNTLEY - The village's quest to widen Route 47 to five lanes from Reed Road to Kreutzer Road is getting a \$1 million boost from the federal government.

The funding, secured by U.S. Rep. Don Manzullo, R-Ill., will pay for final engineering of the project. The funding is included in an \$820 billion appropriation bill that has been approved by Congress and is awaiting President Bush's signature, Manzullo spokesman Rich Carter said.

"This is just the start of our commitment," Carter said. "We are also seeking funding for the Route 47 widening in the long-range transportation bill."

Officials hope that the seed money will propel the \$13 million project onto the Illinois Department of Transportation's five-year plan for road improvements.

Village Manager Carl Tomaso said widening the 2-mile stretch of Route 47 is crucial for Huntley, where the population has grown from 5,600 to more than 12,000 in the past three years.

Route 47

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"We're very happy," Tomaso said. "This is a great step forward toward the implementation of the Route 47 widening project. The benefits are very simple. It will move the traffic through the village in a very expeditious manner, and allow for commercial growth and development to better function."

Final engineering might take 18 months to complete, Tomaso said. If funding for the project is secured, it would be at least three years until construction could commence.

IDOT paid about \$600,000 for the preliminary engineering on the project.

Manzullo has requested another \$13 million for the project in a long-term transportation bill, which is passed every six years, Carter said. He does not expect that much will be allocated for the project.

Carter said that in past funding initiatives, state officials have been more willing to match funds once federal dollars have been secured.

In 1999, \$4 million was allocated for widening Route 47. However, IDOT officials said that money was for a smaller version of the project. Once it was discovered that a larger, five-lane improvement was needed, the funding disappeared.

Huntley officials have been lobbying for the restoration of state funding for the Route 47 project, and for help with construction of a full interchange at Route 47 and Interstate 90. They conducted two meetings with state and regional leaders to drum up support for the projects.

Manzullo sent his deputy chief of staff to one of the meetings.

Village President Chuck Sass said the effort appears to be paying off.

"All the hard work and effort between writing letters, going and meeting with officials, lobbying them, whatever you want to call it, paid off," Sass said. "And we are very appreciative of Congressman Manzullo's efforts. It is a step in the right direction to get this back on the radar screen."

What's next?

Construction could begin as soon as 2007 on widening Route 47 to five lanes between Kreutzer and Reed roads in Huntley, officials said.