

Minutes of the Transportation Committee

The Transportation Committee of the McLean County Board met on Tuesday, November 5, 2002 at 7:30 a.m. in Room 700, Law and Justice Center, 104 West Front Street, Bloomington, Illinois.

Members Present: Chairman Bass, Members Hoselton, Owens, Emmett and Selzer, Johnson

Members Absent: None

Staff Members Present: Mr. John Zeunik, County Administrator; Mr. Terry Lindberg, Assistant County Administrator; Ms. Lucretia Wherry, Human Resources Assistant, County Administrator's Office

Department Heads/
Elected Officials Present: Mr. Jack Mitchell, County Engineer, County Highway Department; Mr. Mark Leake, Highway Maintenance Coordinator, Highway Department

Others Present: Ms. Chris Bauer, Regional Planning Commission

Chairman Bass called the meeting to order at 7:32 a.m. and declared the presence of a quorum. Chairman Bass presented the minutes of the October 1, 2002 meeting for approval.

Motion by Owens/Johnson to approve and place on file the minutes of the October 1, 2002 meeting of the Transportation Committee. Motion carried.

Chairman Bass presented the bills as prepared and recommended for transmittal to the Transportation Committee by the Auditor's Office.

Motion by Emmett/Johnson to recommend approval of the bills as presented and recommended by the Auditor's Office. Motion carried.

Mr. Owens asked why the bills reflected an increase in overtime. Mr. Jack Mitchell replied that the overtime is needed to complete work on the Lexington-Leroy Road and the Danvers Road.

Mr. Jack Mitchell, County Engineer, Highway Department presented the Chenoa Joint Bridge Culvert on Letcher Street, Chenoa and the Farnsworth Engineering agreement. Letcher Road runs north south and bends around Old Route 66, west of the railroad tracks and the downtown. Holes have rusted through the culvert. At one time the road was closed, but the road has been patched for the winter. The City of Chenoa has asked that replacing the culvert be a joint project between the City of Chenoa and McLean County.

An aluminum box culvert is the best choice for a replacement. The City is receiving \$25,000.00 from the State. This funding has to be spent or is will be lost. The total cost for the project is \$100,000.00 and will be split 50/50 between the City of Chenoa and McLean County. Mr. Owens asked how much is the fee for the Farnsworth Group. Mr. Mitchell stated that Farnsworth Group would be paid an hourly rate, not to exceed \$10,000.00. Mr. Hoselton asked if the Letting Results are included in the cost. Mr. Mitchell replied that the Letting Results are for the Chenoa Road district authorizing the engineering and bids for the box culvert.

Mr. Hoselton asked if \$10,000.00 is above the average rate for engineering fees. Mr. Mitchell stated that the market rate is 10% of the project cost for the first 50% of the project. After 50% of the project, the remaining cost is 7%. The reason that the engineering fee remains at 10% for the entire project is that the project is in an urban area. Urban areas have more restrictions, which call for more calculations than rural areas do.

Mr. Hoselton asked if the Highway Department would do some of the engineering work. Mr. Mitchell stated that Farnsworth Group does the engineering work for the City of Chenoa. The Highway Department would handle installing the box culvert. Mr. Hoselton asked why the Highway Department is not doing the engineering work. Mr. Mitchell replied that the Farnsworth Group would receive the Department of Natural Resources, permits since the project is in an urban area and the calculations are more complicated.

Mr. Owens asked if the project is an emergency. Mr. Mitchell replied that the culvert has failed and if it is not repaired soon, the State funding would be lost. Mr. Owens asked if the County has been watching the culvert. Mr. Mitchell replied that the culvert is within

the city limits of Chenoa. The City of Chenoa contacted the Highway Department when the culvert became a problem.

Mr. Selzer asked if the Farnsworth Group has already started work. Mr. Mitchell stated that the Farnsworth Group has started work with the Township. The bids and the petition are out. Chairman Bass asked when the project would be complete. Mr. Mitchell replied that the bids would be in by the end of the year. Construction would start in the spring.

Motion by Hoselton/Owens to recommend approval of the Chenoa Joint Culvert project and the Farnsworth Group Engineering Agreement. Motion carried.

Mr. Mitchell presented the Yates Road District Bridge Repair petition. Yates Road is 1 mile south of Route 24. The bridge is seven years old. The corner of the bridge is washed out and needs to be repaired. The Yates Road District qualifies for assistance from the McLean County Bridge Matching Fund. The total costs are \$3,500.00. The County's portion is \$1,750.00.

Motion by Owens/Emmett to recommend approval of a petition to Repair the Yates Road District Bridge. Motion carried.

Mr. Mitchell presented a proposed Illinois Cash Farm Lease with Mr. Larry Durbin. This lease is for the property that the Highway Department purchased on Route 9 East.

Motion by Selzer/Owens to recommend approval of a proposed Illinois Cash Farm Lease with Mr. Larry Durbin. Motion carried.

Mr. Mitchell presented the IDOT Audits for the McLean County Road Districts Township Bridge Funds, the McLean County Road Districts for Motor Fuel Tax, and the McLean County Motor Fuel Tax fund.

Motion by Selzer/Emmett to accept and place on file as presented the IDOT Audits for the McLean County Road Districts Township Bridge Fund, the McLean County Road Districts for Motor Fuel Tax, and the McLean County Motor Fuel Tax Funds. Motion carried.

Mr. Mitchell presented the Letting Results for the Chenoa Joint Culvert. The bid came in at 1% over the estimated costs. The staff is recommending approval of the bid to Contech Construction Products, Inc.

The Bellflower Road project bids were 18% over the estimated costs. The staff does not recommend approval. The project will need to be rebid once alternates are looked at.

Motion by Hoselton/Selzer to recommend approval of the Letting Results for the Chenoa Joint Culvert. Motion carried.

Mr. Mitchell presented the road work status for Towanda Barnes Road. Section 97-00165-00-FP. The south sections are almost complete. There is a short list of punch list items to complete.

Section 96-00168-00-FP is from Ireland Grove Road to Route 9. This section is almost complete as well. The Airport Authority has repaid \$520,000.00 of their portion owed to the County. The Airport Authority is seeking State aide for the remaining \$304,000.00. Mr. Mitchell explained that when the engineer's estimate was proposed, in the early 1990's, the estimated costs were significantly lower than the actual costs.

Mr. Selzer asked what is the County's position on repayment by the Airport Authority. Mr. Selzer asked if the County could charge interest on the outstanding balance owed. Mr. Mitchell explained that the project was done through an Intergovernmental Agreement, which can be changed if both parties agree to the changes.

Chairman Bass asked if the Airport Authority knew that they would not have the funds at the end of the project. Mr. John Zeunik, County Administrator, replied that the Authority secured the original amount of \$520,000.00, based on the engineering estimate. However, the Airport Authority only has so much borrowing capacity, which the Airport Authority has maxed out. The bids were just much higher than expected.

Chairman Bass asked if the Airport Authority thought they owed a flat amount. Mr. Zeunik stated that the original agreement goes back to 1989. The last agreement, which included signaling Ireland Grove Road, indicates that the airport is responsible for the local share. Mike LaPier has been in contact with the County Board Chairman and is making a good faith effort to find additional funding.

The Committee directed the County Administrator to contact Mr. LaPier and request that the Airport Authority provide communicates indicating what steps they are taking to find additional funding and an expected date of repayment. The Committee agreed that monthly updates would not be necessary once the communication was received.

Section 98-00113-01-FP, is coming along. Pipe and the tile culverts have been installed on the southbound lanes. The curbs and gutters will be poured soon. If the weather holds, the binding may be laid before winter. The State billing has not been received on the project as of yet.

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Mr. Mitchell presented the status of the Leroy-Lexington Road, section 99-0044-06-WR. The Lexington-Leroy Road is seal coated. The cool mix will be laid, but the second layer will have to wait until next year.

Mr. Mitchell presented Danvers Road, section 02-0038-04 WR. Rowe has paved the Danvers Road. The drainage will be done in the next few weeks.

Mr. Mitchell presented a memo regarding Representative Keith Sommer's visit. Mr. Mitchell provided the Committee with the topics, which were discussed at that meeting.

Mr. Selzer stated that he received a phone call from the owner of Kraft's farm. Mrs. Kraft was not aware that her farm may be in the proposed corridor for the East Side By Pass. Mrs. Kraft was notified of the possibility when a reporter visited her house, asking for her opinion. Mr. Selzer stated that he is upset that the citizens directly affected by the proposed corridor and interstate interchanges have not been notified. The citizens need to be directly notified rather than expecting them to read legal notices in the newspaper.

Mr. Mitchell stated that the County is not currently involved in the public hearings for the interstate. The McLean County Regional Planning Commission is in charge of working with the consultants. An official recommendation has not been made. Ms. Chris Bauer stated that the McLean County Regional Planning Commission is only discussing the option presented by the consultants.

The Committee directed Mr. Zeunik to call Ms. Jennifer Sicks at the McLean County Regional Planning Commission to request that the property owners who are affected by the proposed East Side Corridor Interchanges be contacted regarding the proposals and future meetings.

Chairman Mitchell presented Mr. Kirk Brown's response letter concerning the I-55 interchanges and Chairman Bass's letter to Jim Jereb. Mr. Hoselton asked what word IDOT would like the County to use instead of ramp. Mr. Mitchell suggested that approach could be used. Mr. Mitchell suggested that the Committee address this issue after the election and a new Secretary of Transportation is appointed.

Mr. Mitchell presented the Fiscal Year 2003 Recommended Budget for the Committee's review.

Motion by Selzer/Emmett to recommend tentative approval of the Fiscal Year 2003 Recommend Budget for the McLean County Highway Department.

The Total Revenue for Highway Fund 120 is \$2,523,494.00. The maximum tax levy is .075%. The tax levy is currently projected at .074%. The expenditures balance with the revenue. Mr. Mitchell requested that 2 new positions be funded out of the Highway fund. Last year, as the Committee remembers, the Highway Department added two seasonal positions to help with the increase in need for snow removal due to the opening of Towanda Barnes Road. However, hiring seasonal employees did not work as well as hoped.

Mr. Selzer asked how many new people are requested in the entire budget. Mr. Terry Lindberg replied that the Fiscal Year 2002 Adopted Budget has 38 Total FTE's for the Highway Department. The Fiscal Year 2003 Recommended Budget requests 40 Total FTE's.

Mr. Mark Leake, Highway Maintenance Coordinator, stated that the new positions are needed to keep Towanda Barnes Road free of snow. The additional responsibility of White Oak Road is also expected. If two new positions were approved, the new positions would offset the need for some of the summer help. The new hires would do some of the work that the seasonal summer help does, including routine maintenance work, which can not always be completed.

Mr. Owens asked why the Highway Department does not wish to continue using seasonal employees. Mr. Mitchell replied there is year round work for the new positions to do. In the past few years, the Highway Department has not been able to keep up with brush cutting. The Highway Department can generate revenue by helping the smaller communities keep up with the need for brush cutting. The generated revenue would offset the salary of one of the individuals.

Mr. Owens asked if the positions would be non-union. Mr. Mitchell replied that the new Truck Driver/Laborers would be union employees. In addition to brush cutting and snow removal, the new positions would do crack sealing and patching, as well as, repairing holes on the shoulder of the road. The new positions are needed to insure public safety on Towanda Barnes Road. If the road drifts, the road would be packed with ice. Approximately, 13,000 cars travel the road each day.

Mr. Hoselton asked if the new positions would have a probationary period. Mr. Mitchell replied that all new employees are subject to a six-month probationary period.

Mr. Selzer stated that he is in favor of using seasonal employees. The use of seasonal employees saves the County money. Mr. Selzer asked Mr. Mitchell if the Highway Department has considered changing hours to allow for a night shift. Mr. Mitchell stated that the Overtime line would not change if a night shift were established, because the Highway Department has to keep the road clear night and day.

Chairman Bass stated that employers have more control over a department when full-time employees are hired. Seasonal employees are less likely to show up for shifts. Seasonal employees tend to have other sources of income, which interfere with their work at the Highway Department.

Mr. Selzer asked if we have looked to other areas for help. He asked if the smaller communities could help out. Mr. Mitchell explained that unfortunately, the smaller communities would need to use their plows at the same time the County would need help. Mr. Hoselton stated that Chenoa uses farmers for snow plowing.

Mr. Lindberg stated that the seasonal employees hired last year created a morale problem with the union. Due to the lack of snow, it was hard to keep the seasonal employees occupied because the seasonal employees were non-union and could not do union work. The seasonal workers were a source of animosity during labor negotiations. The union could have filed a grievance against the County.

Chairman Bass stated that a lot of construction workers are on unemployment during the off season. Mr. Mitchell stated that if the construction workers took on plowing, the construction workers might lose their unemployment.

Mr. Hoselton asked if the County ever hired from the union hall. Mr. Mitchell stated that equipment has been contracted by the Department that comes with a union hall employee to man it. However, the Highway Department has not hired employees from the union hall.

Mr. Mitchell noted that the Capital Improvement line item has been changed to reflect the garage that was budgeted for in 2002, but has not been built due to the purchase of the property on Route 9. The new garage will be built on the new property. The architecture agreement should be ready for the December Transportation Committee Meeting.

Mr. Hoselton asked where on the property the garage would be located. Mr. Mitchell replied that he is not sure yet.

Chairman Bass asked if landscaping is available through the State. Mr. Mitchell stated that he would look into it. In the past, the Department of Parks and Recreation has supplied trees. Mr. Emmett stated that the trees available through the State are seedlings.

The Committee reviewed the new equipment list. The cost for the new equipment is \$405,000.00. The sale of old equipment will generate \$62,000.00. The equipment will most likely be purchased after the first installment of property taxes, in order to have the snow equipment in time to break them in before the snow.

Mr. Mitchell noted that used graders cost the same as new graders. Mr. Mitchell stated that in future years it might be prudent to keep graders longer than the Highway Department is currently doing.

Mr. Hoselton asked how many employees take home vehicles at night. Mr. Mitchell stated that nine employees take vehicles home at night year around. The engineers, Fleet Managers and Sign Forman take home a vehicle. For the engineers having a vehicle offsets the less competitive salary offered at the Highway Department. In the past, all non-union operators were allowed to take home a vehicle. That practice changed 10 years ago. In the winter, the truck driver laborers take home plows, which saves time when they are called in.

Chairman Bass noted that the cost for 3 radios is \$5,000.00. Mr. Selzer asked why employees need a cell phone and a radio. Mr. Mitchell explained that while it seems excessive, both forms of communication are necessary. The Engineers and Technicians have both in their vehicles due to the need to be able to contact vendors and be able to contact other Highway employees, who may not have cell phones. The Truck Driver/Laborers have radios only. Mr. Selzer suggested using Nextel radios. Mr. Mitchell explained that some parts of the County are of cell tower range. Mr. Selzer asked if the radios work throughout the County. Mr. Mitchell replied that not all areas have coverage, but the coverage was better than with cell phones.

The Committee reviewed the Bridge Matching Fund 121, noting that the total in the property tax line item needs to be adjusted in the Fiscal Year 2003 Recommended Budget reflect a total of \$1,285,378.00.

The Committee reviewed the McLean County Matching Fund 122. The Committee noted that revenue and expenditures balance.

The Committee reviewed the County Motor Fuel Tax Fund 123. Mr. Hoselton noted that \$4,000.00 is spent on schooling and conferences. Mr. Hoselton asked that details on conferences be provided. Mr. Mitchell replied that most of the schooling and conferences are for Engineer training.

Hearing no further questions, Chairman Bass called for a vote on the previous motion.

Motion carried.

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There being nothing further to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned by Chairman Bass at 8:58 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lucretia A. Wherry
Recording Secretary