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Ryan, Blagojevich may address I-336 rally

By Yinka Tella/Journal Staff Writer

MACOMB - Gubernatorial candidates Jim Ryan and Rod Blagojevich have a chance to stake out their stand on the ongoing campaign for the construction of Interstate 336 connecting Macomb through Fulton County to Peoria and Chicago at a June 13 rally slated for Fulton County Fairgrounds in Lewistown.

While Ryan already confirmed participation, Blagojevich's campaign team will make a firm commitment next week.

Put together by the 336 Coalition, a lobby group committed to the realization of the project, the rally will attract local community leaders, politicians and activists interested in the region's economic development.

Cindy Anderson, Chair of Macomb Chamber of Commerce, who is expected at the rally, said the I-336 project will serve as an engine of growth for the area.

"It's going to make Macomb more easily acceptable and eventually precipitate economic development," Anderson said.

The Quincy-Macomb stretch of the I-336 project was fully funded in the governor's five-year plan. It is presently being constructed.

Anderson said the Lewistown rally will focus on efforts to link Macomb with Peoria.

"We are not aware of any economic study on the impact of I-336 on Macomb, but it's well documented communities on four-lane highways do well in economic development and population

growth," Anderson said. "If you look at the last census, you will see that most of the areas that saw growth are located at the crossroads of four-lane expressways and interstates."

Mark Johann, president of 336 Coalition, said a big turnout will be a boost to the efforts to secure funding for the second and third phases of the project especially if the gubernatorial candidates show up. Preliminary studies were undertaken on the road by the Illinois Department of Transportation in the 1970s but absence of local enthusiasm and uncertainty over funding sources led to the abandonment of the project.

(For the rest of this story purchase the May 31 issue)

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