

The Daily Ledger

Fulton County's Home Newspaper Online

IDOT official gives update on Route 336

By JOHN FROEHLING/of the Daily Ledger

The Illinois Department of Transportation plans to hold a public meeting on preliminary alignment studies for Route 336 on Dec. 7 at Canton High School. Similar meetings are also planned elsewhere in December but have yet to be scheduled. Alignments are possible paths for the four-lane highway to be built from Peoria to Macomb in this case.

Mike McLuckie, liaison engineer for IDOT District 4 based in Peoria, spoke about the highway project at the weekly meeting of Canton Rotary Club on Wednesday at Canton Elks Lodge. He was introduced by Rotary member Mark Johann, who is president of the Route 336 Coalition.

McLuckie explained his job is to work with engineering consultants hired to study road projects for IDOT. For Route 336, a consulting firm in Chicago called URS Corp. was hired in 2002. So far, funding only for engineering studies has been provided. The next step is to get funding beginning after federal funding is provided to construct the 60-mile road from Peoria to Macomb. It can cost \$400 million to \$700 million per mile, depending on where and when the road is built. Such projects are constructed in sections and take years to complete.

A five-year process is generally required before construction begins. It involves corridor studies for about 1 1/2 years and completion of a design report and environmental impact statement over the next 3 1/2 years. Environmental considerations include historic sites -- including old Indian burial grounds and other archeological concerns -- as well as impact on plant and animal species and other conditions.

Corridor studies began in November 2002. A preferred corridor received formal IDOT approval June 23, 2004. The corridor ranged from 2 1/2 to 7 1/2 miles wide. The corridor will be adjusted, however, to stretch a mile farther north in the Marietta area in response to requests from Bushnell area residents, McLuckie said.

Alignment studies are conducted to narrow the broad path of a corridor. Options represent 300-foot-

wide swaths where the road may go.

Moving west to east from Peoria, three alignments are being looked at on the way to Farmington: along Route 116, north of Rt. 116 and south of Rt. 116. There are pros and cons to each scenario, McLuckie said. For example, railroads run south of Rt. 116. It would be nice to avoid cutting into private property, but will the rail lines be willing to give up property?

Several different alignments are possible between Farmington and Canton. Some skirt old strip-mine land, and some cross through such rough areas. It is more expensive to build through strip-mine land. Then there is the question of interchanges on Route 78. One possibility is north of Norris and two others are south of Norris.

Eventually, everything will tie into Route 9 west of Canton, said McLuckie. Two options are connect east or west of the prison (Illinois River Correctional Center). Utilizing the Canton-Cuba blacktop is desired, as Route 336 moves on. That blacktop is a much used road, and another railroad right-of-way is in the area. IDOT is also looking at cutting across property owned by Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, formerly known as MSD or Metropolitan Sanitary District, to get to Cuba.

At Cuba, the road can go north or south, following Route 95 in one form or another, McLuckie continued. Once it gets past Marietta, there are a lot of ways it could go. Possibly 10 alignment options exist at that point. Numerous rail lines are in the area, but so are some historic farms, and IDOT wants to be careful.

Also to be considered is whether the road will be freeway -- like Interstate-74 -- or an expressway that can be accessed by side roads like the four-lane road from Kingston Mines to Peoria. The road could have elements of both types of design, however.

In addition to currently developing preliminary alignments and preparing for public meetings in December, IDOT is identifying constraints, gathering environmental data and presenting alignments to advisory groups. Public involvement includes public hearings, press releases, continuing to meet with the 336 Coalition and sending newsletters to those on mailing lists.

McLuckie said IDOT is also putting together a Web site for those interested in the Route 336 project. The site is not completed yet, he noted.

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By MICHELLE MARTIN/of the Daily Ledger

PEORIA -- Three doctors and a woman from Texas testified Wednesday at a mental competency hearing in federal court for the accused arsonist of the former International Harvester plant in Canton.

Jerry A. Sprabary, 40, formerly of Canton, is charged with maliciously destroying and damaging the former IH plant on Aug. 6, 1997. He was arrested at his home in Fort Worth, Texas, on May 16, 2002, on charges of arson stemming from the IH fire.

Betty Carley, a 69-year-old resident of Sunset Manor Nursing Home, died due to being struck by a van driven by an employee after the facility was ordered evacuated by former Canton Police Chief Mike Elam due to the fire. Canton Fire Chief Stanko said the damage estimate at the time of the fire was \$2.4 million.

The hearing held Wednesday was to determine if Sprabary was competent to stand trial and also if he was competent to waive his Miranda rights at the time of his arrest.

Dr. David Mrad, a psychologist for the U.S. Medical Center for federal prisoners in Springfield, Mo., was the first to testify during the 3 1/2-hour hearing. Mrad said he was to determine if the suspect had a mental disease or defect which would render him incapable of understanding or participating in upcoming court proceedings.

Mrad testified he found Sprabary has an alcohol dependency disorder from excessive use of alcohol; a major depressive disorder, which is currently in partial remission; and a borderline intellectual function condition, which indicates Sprabary's intelligence is below average, but not at a level of retardation.

He testified Sprabary is aware he is charged with arson and knows what arson means. Mrad also found Sprabary understands the difference between guilty and not guilty pleas and also the roles of

the participants in the trial process. Sprabary understands if he is convicted, he could receive a fairly long sentence. Sprabary understands the concept of evidence and the concept of plea bargaining.

Mrad testified he felt Sprabary could actively participate in his own defense and understands the need to work with his attorney and provide information.

Mrad disputed an earlier evaluation performed by Dr. Valez, which found Sprabary to be mentally incompetent. He said during that evaluation, there were no references to any consideration of the amount of effort Sprabary put forth. For example, during that evaluation, Sprabary consistently answered "I don't know." There were no follow-up questions, nor was Sprabary required to think about the questions and give his best answers.

Mrad stated that during the evaluation he conducted, Sprabary was able to answer general questions. With explanations provided, Sprabary was also able to retain and understand most aspects of the trial process.

"In my opinion, Jerry Sprabary is mentally competent to stand trial," Mrad stated.

Dr. Robert Denney, a clinical neuropsychologist, has published various articles and chapters concerning malingering detection. He described "malingering" as a systematic reason which causes a person to respond in a specific manner in a typical situation.

A negative response would be that a person presents a negative perspective of himself, does not apply himself, or presents himself as more impaired than he is.

One of the tests conducted by Denney was a Rey-15 Item Memory Test, in which the subject is shown 15 items to remember. They are then to draw the items.

"The truth is, the test is quite easy," said Denney. "Most everyone does fine."

The test is used to identify a subject who is malingering.

During the test, Sprabary was shown pictures which consisted of the capital letters A, B, C; the numbers 1, 2, 3; lower case letters a, b, c; a circle, square, and triangle; and Roman numerals I, II, III. Sprabary was only able to recall two items: A, B. Sprabary next was given a sheet with 30 different markings and told to identify the 15 items from the first set. He circled A, a pentagon, and an equal sign.

Denney found this indicated Sprabary was not applying himself. Denney added recognition is easier than free recall. Denney strongly suggested Sprabary was playing a game with the test and not trying.

He also conducted a word memory test, a well established test of effort. Sprabary was given a list of simple words, such as man-woman, cat-dog. He was then given another list with two words, one on the first list and another not on the list. Sprabary was to determine which word did not belong. Denney testified the scores indicated Sprabary was not putting forth an appropriate effort.

A Validity Indicator Profile (VIP) test was also conducted, which is based on forced choice.

This test consisted of one right answer and one wrong answer. Denney stated average results should fall around 50 percent correct, even if the subject is just guessing. The test helps determine if a person is giving an incorrect answer intentionally. If the score falls at either end of the range, the subject is either trying to succeed or wanting to fail.

Denney said the results indicated Sprabary wanted to fail.

Dr. Jason V. Dana, a clinical psychologist from the Federal Bureau of Prisons, testified results from tests he gave indicated a minimum effort was put forth, inconsistent results were yielded and that Sprabary might not be performing up to standard.

He wanted to look at Sprabary's basic level of functioning performance and determine if Sprabary was competent to voluntarily, intelligently and knowingly waive his Miranda rights at the time of his arrest.

Sprabary was confronted about not putting forth much effort in the testing, and Dana suggested he might not be participating to the level. Dana said he believed Sprabary then began to put forth a good effort.

Sprabary was given an Intelligence Quotient test and found to have an IQ of 82, which is an adequate structure of intelligence capacity. "He is on the cusp between low average and borderline intellectual function condition," said Denney.

When Sprabary answered "I don't know" to questions, Denney followed up with questions to determine if Sprabary did not actually know the answer or was not sure if the answer he would give would be correct.

Sprabary was given a hypothetical situation about two men fighting in a bar in order to determine his knowledge of court proceedings.

There was a wide variety of information that, with no prior knowledge, Sprabary would not understand, but he would have the capability to learn it, Denney stated. "He has the capacity to understand once it is explained," added Denney.

Denney determined Sprabary had the capability to knowingly, voluntarily and intelligently waive his

Miranda rights.

Glenda Smith, a former friend of Sprabary from Texas, was the final witness for the day. She owns a wheelchair business and has worked with physically handicapped individuals for over 20 years.

Smith testified she knew Sprabary after being introduced to him by Sprabary's father 10 to 12 years ago.

She said after the first visit, she liked Sprabary and he began to hang around her house quite frequently. She added she took him "under her wing."

Sprabary would help with chores around the house, Smith added. He was drawing disability benefits and knew he was not allowed to work, but he wanted to keep busy. She also said she knew Sprabary was an alcoholic.

Smith testified she knew Sprabary could not read and often came to her for assistance with problems. She added he is very easily led by other people.

Smith testified that after Sprabary had been questioned by police from Canton about an incident which had occurred in Illinois, he told her "something had happened in Illinois, and I'm going to have to take the rap for it." He maintained his innocence. She added he was scared about the situation and was "like a child cowering in a corner."

Smith also testified Sprabary would call her from jail after his arrest and ask for assistance and advice. He would ask about Miranda rights and what they meant, and ask for her interpretation of what his lawyer had said.

She said he is like a small child. "You have to go over things several times for him to comprehend."

Federal Judge Joe Billy McDade called for a recess at 5:30 p.m. The hearing will continue at 10 a.m. Monday.

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By LINDA WOODS/Executive Editor

BANNER - The Banner Marsh Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Project was recognized at a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Saturday, Sept. 25 at the Marsh.

Banner Marsh is part of the Illinois River Valley Flight Corridor, which is part of the Upper Mississippi River Flyway, a major migration route for waterfowl and other migratory birds.

Officials from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) were present, along with dignitaries and supporters of the project.

According to officials, the environmental improvements at Banner Marsh enhance about 5,000 acres for use by migratory birds and other wildlife.

Project costs totaled \$6.9 million, of which \$1.9 million was paid by the state of Illinois as project sponsor.

Colonel Duane Gapinski, a physical engineer and commander of the Rock Island District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers called the Upper Mississippi River System a truly unique system of major national wildlife refuges and a commercial navigation.

Gapinski explained that for thousands of years, millions of migratory birds have rested and fed in the Illinois Waterway river bottoms during annual migrations from northern breeding grounds to southern winter homes. "Because of the cooperative effort between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and other federal and state agencies, and through Congressional funding, we have ensured that waterfowl will continue to use areas like Banner Marsh for years to come," said Gapinski.

"The IDNR has been key to the completion of this project. They have provided many hours of labor

and financial support to ensure that the Banner Marsh project was completed. They have also been instrumental in the Environmental Management Program. Their forward-thinking and progressive attitude towards environmental restoration has been a key component of the program," emphasized Gapinski as he introduced Joel Brunsvold, director of the IDNR. Brunsvold echoed much of what was called a cooperative effort.

Keynote speakers at the occasion were 18th District Illinois Congressman Ray LaHood (R-Peoria) and Jerry Lack, staff assistant for 17th District Illinois Cong. Lane Evans (D-Rock Island).

"Preserving our precious natural resources through restoration and rehabilitation projects along the Illinois River such as this one is essential," remarked LaHood. "Generations of river community residents will enjoy this legacy for many years to come."

A statement from Evans read, "The Environmental Management Program is a unique federal program. It allows federal, state, and local partners to work together to preserve our precious lands and wildlife. It helps us save the treasures of our earth for future generations to enjoy."

Special features of the project include: clearing and stabilizing the existing perimeter levee; rehabilitating the pump station; planting approximately 144 acres of prairie habitat; and constructing two control structures.

The project allows greater flexibility in water level and vegetation management which helps produce a combination of open water, marsh vegetation, and floodplain forest, according to officials. That habitat is expected to provide reliable food, cover, and resting areas for a variety of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.

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Motor Activity Programs (MAP) are a unique training program designed to meet the distinctive needs of those persons with profound disabilities who do not yet possess the physical and/or behavioral skills necessary to compete in official Special Olympics sports.

MAP has been developed based on the belief all persons can participate in sport training at some level, and sport participation is beneficial and can facilitate appropriate physical and social skills necessary to bring interaction with non-disabled peers in community settings. MAP emphasizes training and participation rather than competition. MAP provides a way for persons with severe disabilities to participate in appropriate recreation activities geared to their ability levels.

The event will be held at Ingersoll School's all-purpose room, beginning at 1 p.m. with the Opening Ceremonies. Many motor activities will run simultaneously, and the event will conclude around 2:30 p.m.

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The winners all reside in Canton and included: Ian Stairwalt, 5; Auston Van Order, 7; Jordan Ketcham, 6; Kyle Wilson, 11; and David Andre, 9. The five winners will each receive a Wal-Mart \$10 Gift Card. Winners can pick up the gift card at the police department.

The program is held weekly in September to call attention to traffic safety at a time when school has resumed session. Those who have helped Canton Police Department make the Buckle Up for Roko Program possible include Wal-Mart, Harmon Towing for moving the sign each week, the Daily Ledger and WBYS.

This year, more than 100 children participated in the program.

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By DENNIS DALMASSO/for The Daily Ledger

I was listening to a sports program the other day and I heard something that made me laugh and also feel really good. It had to do with a talk radio host and a caller that he didn't expect.

The talk radio host had made some disparaging remarks about the Boston Red Sox and their locker room. This guy is basically a muckraker and likes to stir up things for ratings. It doesn't really matter if what he says is true as long as he draws interest.

Basically what he was saying was that the Red Sox didn't like each other very much and that there was a lot of tension in their clubhouse during the past few weeks. He continued by saying there was a problem between Curt Schilling and Pedro Martinez. He based this concept on the fact Schilling had not hugged Martinez after a recent victory. That was all that he had to go on.

Much to the muckraker's surprise, the next caller was Curt Schilling. What I really liked about this was Schilling wouldn't let this clown get a word in edgewise. He just kept hammering at the point that this was not true and this was how rumors started. He would not let the guy off the hook. It was not only good theater, but it was also too true.

We are a society that loves "hype." We want to know everything about everything, even if it isn't true. In some cases, we like the fiction better than the fact. This is why we have so many talk radio programs out there ... we want to express our opinion or displeasure, even if we have no idea what we are talking about. This isn't new. Gossip columnists have been doing this for years and with great popularity. People have read *The National Enquirer* and *the Weekly World News* for years and believed what they read.

But it is worse now than ever before. With so much media and so much access, this was bound to happen. Calvin Trillen calls all the talking heads "sanctimonious gasbags." I love reading Calvin

Trillen. I would never have thought to use "sanctimonious" and "gasbags" in the same sentence. But that is what so much of this really is ... gas! It floats through the airwaves and disappears without really meaning anything.

Why do we fall for this bilge? Simple ... we are human and we are nosy. We want to know the dirt. Then we like to spread it like the manure that it is. I am as guilty as the next person.

As I have grown older and hopefully wiser, I have become more leery of the rumor. I am very suspicious of a sentence that starts with, "This is what I heard," or "Someone said." I want a source. I want to know who is making the statement and what is the evidence that the statement is true. Hearing something at the grocery store or the gas station does not make it the gospel. The fact that we can repeat the rumor does not make it gospel either.

I have found over time that most of these people who depend on word-of-mouth rumors are pretty miserable and are looking for the next great trauma. They also pretty much aren't happy unless you are miserable too. I guess if the shoe fits ... wear it.

As for me, I applaud Curt Schilling and anyone like him who stands up for the truth. Even if it isn't a fight for the truth, at least it should be a fight for some type of proof when a statement is made.

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