



# 336 Update

*The Official Newsletter of The Route 336 Coalition*

## TRANSPORTATION BILL VITAL TO ILLINOIS ECONOMY CONGRESSMAN RAY LAHOOD

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2005

**A**s Illinois continues to lag behind our neighboring states and the entire nation in the ongoing economic recovery, I believe one of the most important pieces of legislation we can enact to help create jobs in Illinois is the transportation bill which has been stalled in Congress.

In March the U.S. House voted almost unanimously to approve a bill which authorizes \$284 billion of transportation projects around the country. These projects are vital to the transportation and economic needs of our nation. As of the writing of this column, the Senate is poised to pass their version of the bill. I am hopeful we can quickly reconcile the legislation and get it on to the President for this signature.

For supporters of the Route 336 project, this bill is vitally important. I was able to specifically earmark \$2 million for pre-construction activities for 336 and I know Congressman Evans earmarked money as well. This is specific money that is on top of any federal formula funding that will go to the project through the Department of Transportation. Funding for Route 336 continues to be one of my highest priorities and I will continue to fight for funding of this project until it is completed.

For Illinois, this bill would provide a much-needed boost to our economy from the federal government. I have said for a long time that the transportation bill is a jobs bill. One only needs to look at the Interstate 74 reconstruction through Peoria to see how transportation projects puts people to work. This support from the feds is in stark contrast to the Governor's administration in Springfield which has enacted anti-business policies over the past two years, has not succeeded in passing a capital projects budget which would help put people to work, and which has driven businesses out of the state. Recent news reports state that Central Illinois residents view the Illinois economy less positively than they did a few months ago, and I believe that is directly tied to the anti-business policies of this Governor.

The transportation bill, also known as the Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, is a six-year bill to fund construction and repairs of roads and bridges around the nation. It also provides the important resources to keep our mass transit systems running. The funding for these projects comes from the federal tax on gasoline, which is not increased under this bill. Funding for transportation projects does not come from general revenue nor from the Social Security Trust Fund. When you fill up your tank, you are helping to pay for projects like Route 336. This bill, when compared to the previous transportation bill which has expired, represents a 42 percent increase in transportation investments. This increased funding level helps all our states move forward with projects that will help to ensure the economic health of the country.

For Illinois, this bill increases transportation investments by over \$1.6 billion during the next six years when compared to previous spending. This investment in the infrastructure of our state will put people to work, increasing tax revenue to help address our State's huge budget hole, and will help move the economy of Illinois in the right direction.

Central and Western Illinois will certainly benefit under this bill.



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Congress has been working on this bill for almost three years, and it is well past time that we get this bill signed into law so our economy and infrastructure can benefit. I applaud the hard work of Speaker Denny Hastert and the Illinois Members of the Transportation Committee in securing a significant increase for the State of Illinois; an increase which benefits all regions of Illinois. I know our Senators support this bill and I hope we can have this bill enacted this summer so we can get moving on transportation projects and job creation.

## **HIGHWAYS SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH**

(submitted by Kim Pierce/Bruce Biagini)

Transportation improvements have played a major role in virtually every stage of industrial development in our history-the early roads, water ports, canals and railroads had major effects on the economic development of this country. However, it's the highways, especially four-lane highways that have a strong relationship with economic growth.

The safe and efficient movement of people in and out of Macomb is not only critical to our personal lives; it is essential to maintaining our economic base. The City of Macomb's largest source of revenue is sales tax. Macomb is the retail center for a 25-mile radius. Good highways make our community accessible to customers for our retail stores. For example, the new Highway 67 makes Macomb much more convenient for residents of the Roseville area. The dollars these shoppers spend and the related sales tax are directly supporting our fire and police departments, streets and other city and county services. This is in addition to the jobs created by the stores and the property tax collected. Additionally, more shoppers in our community attract a greater selection of stores from which to choose.

The students at Western Illinois University need to have safe, efficient and convenient access to the university. Parents of these students need to believe driving to Macomb is safe or they will enroll their children at Illinois State in Normal, Eastern in Charleston, or Northern in De Kalb, all of which are served by Interstate Highways. These WIU students provide thousands of jobs, on and off campus, for our citizens. Our medical community, including McDonough District Hospital, relies on patients from outside the Macomb area-convenient access is essential to supporting our excellent medical services.

Communities need products, not only to support their retail, educational and medical community, but also our manufacturing. For existing employers, as well as new potential employers, good transportation is fundamental-the location of both Schwans and Pella to Macomb hinged on highways, as did the expansion of NTN Bower.

Additionally, efficient and competitive trucking services are vital when moving raw materials in and finished products out of a community. Many companies will not consider locating in a community not served by a four-lane highway. The completion of both 67 and 336 will undoubtedly play a major role in our present and future recruiting efforts.

For 25 years we have been working on securing safe, four-lane highways for our region. Success has been slow but measurable. Routes to the north (Monmouth) and to the west (Quincy) are getting very close. Routes to the south (Alton) and east (Peoria) are on the drawing board. Highways move people and materials to and through a region. The more efficient these corridors of commerce are, the more traffic they generate. The more traffic generated equates to more employment opportunities to communities located on these corridors.

Macomb is positioned for growth. Macomb has embraced an economic development strategy that includes new four-lane highways. If Macomb and the entire 336 Corridor is to grow and prosper we need a good transportation system, we need a four-lane highway from Peoria to Quincy.



**News Around 336 - Mark Johann**

At the board level, there has been a fairly limited amount of news to report since our last *Update*.

But there *has* been some news. Since our last issue.....

On the political front, Congressmen Lane Evans and Ray LaHood both won their respective races and retain the important seats they hold. Of course everyone knows that Barack Obama won the election to fill the US senate seat vacated by Senator Fitzgerald. These three individuals, along with Senator Durbin, will be very important to our efforts as they continue their work on a new federal transportation bill. At a minimum, we look forward to achieving a materially higher level of funding in the bill's "formula". We know that Congressmen Evans and LaHood have both requested demonstration funds for 336.

Currently, Illinois receives less than \$1 for every dollar that comes from Illinois in Federal taxes paid at the pump. We've been a "donor" state for over six (6) years now.

There were also a good number of newly elected officials to important positions along the corridor. We have many new mayors and village officials to meet with over the next few weeks and months.

Efforts are underway to convene a round-table discussion with several of our federal and state elected officials from Peoria to Macomb in the very near future. Board members also attended constituent meetings/hearings in Peoria and Macomb to echo our concerns over actions in Springfield that have (for the very first time ever) tapped transportation funding to support the general fund needs of the state. A permanent end has to be put in place to that practice, not to mention refunding what was depleted from highway funds.

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## 336 Coalition Membership Drive On Going

Over the past year, the 336 Coalition board has been working hard to increase the Coalition's dues paying membership.

Memberships funds are used to pay for our news-letter, sponsor rallies, and pay for other expenses all aimed at advocating the four-lane highway from Peoria to Macomb.

If you're not currently a member, please consider joining now by completing the enrollment section of this month's *Update*.



**YES!** I want to keep the momentum moving for a four-lane highway in western Illinois. Sign me up for a membership in the 336 coalition.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Company (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

**Donations of all sizes will be accepted. Please make checks payable to the "336 Coalition" and mail to:**

**336 Coalition**

**P.O. Box 761, Canton, IL 61520**

### MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

*Individual - \$25 • Business and Industry under 20 employees - \$100*

*Business and Industry over 20 employees - \$200 • Cities, Townships and Municipalities - \$500 • Counties - \$1,000*



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