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Group seeks \$3M to widen U.S . 30**Sauk Valley Newspapers (Dixon-Sterling, IL)** - Wednesday, February 28, 2007

MORRISON - It's going to be a long time before the Highway 30 Coalition gets that road widened to four lanes, but the group is continuing to make progress.

Coalition members traveled to Washington, D.C., on Feb. 12 to lobby area legislators for money to help widen U.S. Route 30 along a 24-mile stretch from Fulton to Prophetstown Road in Rock Falls.

The group met with staff members for Sens. Barack Obama and Dick Durbin and Rep. Don Manzullo, and with Rep. Phil Hare, and submitted a formal request for \$3 million in federal funds from the 2008 transportation budget.

The money would be added to the nearly \$10 million already raised to pay for the first two phases of engineering work that must be done before actual construction can begin.

"Each year, these legislative trips allow us to personally inform our legislators of the issues affecting our area. It is because of these trips that the project continues to build momentum," said Heather Bennett, director of the Fulton Chamber of Commerce, and a coalition member.

Actual construction is still at least five to 10 years off, but that \$3 million would mean most of the preliminary engineering work will get done, said Betty Steinert, Whiteside County's economic development director.

The first phase of engineering, set to begin this spring, will take about two years to complete. It involves completing an environmental impact study and deciding on exactly what route the four-lane extension will take around Morrison.

The second phase will take two to three years and includes preparing a construction plan, doing land surveys and property appraisals and negotiating with landowners.

"As we move through this, we will be having public meetings so people can bring any of their concerns to us about the project," Steinert said.

With 12,000 vehicles - many of them semis and other large trucks - passing through Morrison daily, a wider highway and bypass around the county seat is a matter of community safety.

"All studies that have been completed show that the four-lane road is needed and that traffic will only continue to grow in the area," Steinert said.

Reach Andrew Walters at (815) 625-3600 or (800) 798-4085, ext. 522.

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