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STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

Capitol Update

By Senator Howard Marklein

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Accelerating Road Projects

Update on Lone Rock Bridge Project

I recently met a constituent in Muscoda who wanted to know when the Lone Rock bridges on Hwy 130 would be replaced. He was disappointed that they weren't done yet.

I absolutely understand and share the frustration about this bridge project. These bridges are long overdue for replacement. They have been patched-up several times. I also know that these bridges are an essential artery for traffic over the river and many of us use them to commute to work, shopping, healthcare and education.

In March 2021, I was very happy to announce that I was able to work with the Department of Transportation (DOT) to accelerate the Lone Rock bridge project by two years so that it could be let in fall 2024 and completed by 2026. It was originally scheduled to start in 2026.

This week, I followed-up with DOT again to ask for an update on the timeline. I was very pleased to learn that the timeline has been accelerated even more. Construction is now scheduled to begin in late 2022 or early 2023 and projected to be completed by the end of 2024. The estimated cost for the project is between \$30 and \$35 million.

One of the primary reasons for the accelerated timeline is because the legislature included funding for design-build projects in the most recent state budget. Design-build projects overlap the design and construction phases to streamline a project leading to faster timelines and increased efficiencies. In traditional road projects, engineering, studies and planning steps must be done in sequential order. This creates a much longer timeline for projects.

Luckily, the Lone Rock bridge projects are being done through design-build and are thus moving much faster. I am proud of the legislature's work to make this happen.

As recently as 2018, the DOT was reporting that the Lone Rock bridge replacement would be completed by 2024. Then, in 2020, the DOT began saying that this project would not be completed until 2028. They told me that from 2015-2018, long-term funding was less than anticipated, so projects were pushed back.

I spent months working with the DOT to find a way to move this project along faster. This old, heavily-traveled bridge cannot wait until 2028. Segments 1 and 2 of the bridge were built in 1932 (90 years ago). Segment 3 was constructed in 1942 (80 years ago)! Light maintenance was done on Segment 2 in 2018. Heavy maintenance was done on all three sections in 2020 that was supposed to extend the life of the bridges by 10 years at the cost of \$1 million. But that means we need to begin working on real replacement right now.

Throughout my terms as your State Senator, I have worked hard to accelerate projects for several rural roads. In 2017, I authored a budget provision that would have accelerated the Hwy 154 road project. The DOT took it one step further and put that project out for bids in November 2017 and it was completed in 2018.

I worked to add the Hwy 154 project into the state budget because it was one of the worst non-backbone state highways in the 17th Senate District from Loganville to the Richland County line.

The DOT heard us loud and clear back then and they are hearing us now. We told them that the people in our communities want better roads and that many of our non-backbone state highways and bridges need to be repaired.

I also recently voted for funding to accelerate work on Hwy 39 – Edmund through Linden to Mineral Point. We moved the let date up by nearly two years and construction will now begin in spring 2023 due to a new influx of Federal infrastructure funding.

I will continue to monitor all of the road projects in the 17th Senate District to ensure that they are continuing on schedule and with the haste and urgency that should be devoted to these important projects. In this case, the squeaky wheel gets the bulldozer to move ground and make progress. I will continue to be a squeaky wheel for you.