



Coalition

NEWSLETTER

January 2004 Issue

PROVIDING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

MEMBER COMMUNITIES

DECATUR	RAMSEY
MACON	VANDALIA
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ASSUMPTION	SANDOVAL
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OCONEE	

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Our Mission:

The primary goal of the Route 51 Coalition is to promote and expedite the construction of Route 51 as a four-lane roadway. The objective is to educate local, state, and federal officials and the general public on the benefits of the project.

Coalition Meets in Vandalia

Congressman Shimkus, District Engineer Reed Featured Speakers

Congressman John Shimkus (R-19, Collinsville) updated the Route 51 Coalition members at a meeting held January 15, 2004 at the Depot Restaurant in Vandalia, and tried to make sense of the alphabet soup that describes the reauthorization of the federal highway bill.

The Congressman stated that the current federal highway package (TEA-21) expired last September and was extended until February 29, 2004. That bill provided \$174 billion for U.S. highways over the last six years.

The Bush administration has proposed a new authorization bill titled the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA) which contains \$195 billion over the

next six years for highway funding.

The Senate has proposed a highway funding package that is not yet complete, but which identifies \$255 billion for the same time frame.



Congressman Shimkus focused his address on the House Bill 3055 which is titled the Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users or TEA-LU. That package totals \$375 billion and contains \$299 for highway funding.

As a co-sponsor, Congressman Shimkus will have the ability to earmark specific needed infrastructure pro-

jects. While not sharing specific details, the congressman indicated he would support specific improvements to the road facility in his district.

Earlier in the month, Congressman Lane Evans (D-17, Rock Island) announced his support for \$11 million in engineering studies that would begin in Pana and extend south, probably to Vandalia.

Congressman Shimkus expressed hope that House Speaker Dennis Hastert would be able to increase the formula that determines the amount Illinois receives from total U.S. highway funding.

IDOT District Engineer Reed Commends Coalition for their efforts Route 51

District Engineer Christine Reed from IDOT District Six in Springfield complimented the Coalition for their diligence in seeking funding for Route 51. "This is exactly the type of activism

you need to keep this project on IDOT's radar screen" she noted. Ms. Reed also praised the Coalition's handout material produced last spring that showed the 75 mile section of Route 51 from Mo-

wearqua to Centralia as the only two lane section in the interstate highway system linking the Gulf of Mexico to Canada. "That is a wonderful statistic that you have made very evident" she stated.



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Who Are Route 51 Coalition Members?

The Route 51 Coalition consists of citizens representing various governmental entities, business interests, labor organizations, and interested individuals along the 99-mile long section of U. S. Route 51 from I-72 (Decatur) to I-64 (Centralia).

The service area for this coalition includes the counties of Macon, Shelby, Christian, Fayette, Marion, Clinton, Washington, and Jefferson, with a combined total population of 325,000.

The communities located along the Route 51 Coalition Corridor are listed on the front of this newsletter.

Supporters include chambers of commerce, municipal and county governments, elected officials, economic development organizations, manufacturers, construction companies, transportation businesses, labor organizations, colleges and universities, hospitals and interested citizens.

Route 51 Coalition: Working to Provide National and Regional Conne-

Springfield Lobbying Activities

Secretary/
Treasurer Jim
Schwarz reported
that the Route 51
Coalition became a
member of the

Transportation For Illinois Coalition last spring. TFIC was established as a sub group of the Illinois State Chamber's Infrastructure Council for the purpose of focusing on efforts to obtain a strong Federal Surface Transportation Reauthorization Act, which expired in 2003. It has been extended for a period of five months and



will expire again February 29, 2004. It is important for this Act to pass in 2004 since House Speaker Dennis Hastert has the influence to obtain a greater share of the gas tax revenues for Illinois.

TFIC partners with the Illinois Department of Transportation and local government to inform and promote the state's

transportation needs. Schwarz also said the Route 51 Coalition is planning another one-day

lobbying effort in April. In the past, the Coalition has served hot dogs and donuts to members of the general assembly to remind them to support Route 51 funding.

Coalition leaders expect to generate a lobbying group of 50 to 100 people to make the argument in Springfield to improve Route 51 to four lanes.