

St. Charles' Red Gate Bridge project gets county blessing

By James Fuller | Daily Herald Staff

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A St. Charles plan to build an additional crossing over the Fox River received the endorsement of the Kane County Board Executive Committee Wednesday, perhaps boosting the city's chances of gaining more state and federal funds for the project.

Kane County and the Forest Preserve District have technically been in support of the project for years, engaging in intergovernmental land swaps to free up the land that the bridge crossing will need for construction.

The plan would erect a two-lane bridge to extend Red Gate Road from Route 31 to Route 25. The bridge would be open to local traffic and create a new tie-in between the Fox River Bike Trail and the Illinois Prairie Path. The bridge is expected to cost up to \$30 million and would not come into existence until 2011 at the current pace the project is on.

The full county board is expected to give their stamp of approval next week along with the blessing of forest preserve district commissioners.

St. Charles Mayor Don DeWitte said the need for the bridge still exists despite the county's own work toward building a new river crossing at Stearns Road.

"Back in 1993, the regional bridge study commissioned by then Congressman Dennis Hastert alluded to the fact that the solution to river crossings in Kane County was not just one or two or three bridges, but it was multiple bridges to be in the county," DeWitte said. "When the decision was made by Kane County to move forward with the Stearns Road Bridge crossing, back in 2005, the city decided that we should move forward with the Red Gate Bridge project as a local project."

DeWitte said engineering on the project is under way and the city expects funding to be locked in when it comes time for construction. The city will host a public hearing for area residents to make comments or voice concerns about the new bridge on Dec. 15.

Once built, St. Charles officials believe the bridge will reduce traffic congestion through St. Charles by 10 percent.