

Future looks bright on potential major railroad hub in Jersey County

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
October 20 2016 2:05 PM



JERSEYVILLE - For a small-town mayor, **Jerseyville's Bill Russell** has been a very busy man on a project that could change the entire destiny of Jersey County and its surrounding rural areas.

For the past several months, Russell has been working non-stop with **Kansas City Southern Railway**, legislators and other officials about building a new transportation facility in Jerseyville.

Russell said Kansas City Southern Railway would offload containers at the facility and in the end, they would be shipped to other cities via semi-trucks. Jerseyville's location is perfect to be a distribution center with its location close to Interstate 255, U.S. Route 67, Interstate-55 and much more, Russell said. He said a couple locations in Jerseyville have been closely looked at in Jerseyville as possible locations for the transportation facility.

Something that would be needed in the process for a new transportation facility would be the completion of the 31.8-mile stretch from Delhi to past Roodhouse. U.S. Route 67 is a north-south highway through western portions of the state and runs from the Clark Bridge in Alton all the way north to Rock Island.

From west of Chapin, near Macomb, to just north of Roodhouse, U.S. 67 is a four-lane highway. It wraps around Jacksonville. U.S. 67 connects south at the beginning of Illinois Route 255.

Wednesday night, Russell and some others met with U.S. Rep. Rodney Davis, who is a member of the Federal Transportation Board. Russell said Davis is extremely supportive of getting U.S. 67 completed from Delhi to just past Roodhouse in the future in the five-year Federal Transportation Bill.

"We have had nothing but positive meetings with Representative Davis," Russell said. "He is positioning on the transportation board to help come up with that money and he wants me to keep driving forward. It is imperative that the state of Illinois get a Capital Bill passed and the completion of U.S. Route 67 in that program. We have to do what is right for all the people."

Russell provided a rough estimate that it would cost \$300 million to complete U.S. Route 67. If the federal government came up with 80 percent of that, the state's part would be about \$60 million, he said.

On Wednesday, Oct. 26, Mayor Russell and some others will be in Kansas City meeting with the Kansas City Southern Rail people and a developer.

"We are probably a year ahead of where we thought we would be," he said. "I have found private enterprise works a lot differently than government."

Russell said the impact of this type of transportation center would be huge for Jersey County and the region. He speculated there would be a lot of construction jobs building the center, then many jobs afterward to operate it. He estimated there could be as many as 500 jobs to start and ultimately could create much above that.

The Jerseyville mayor has signed a non-disclosure agreement with those involved with the project, but it is his guess something could be announced “by the end of the year” about the potential center.

The center would involve others in what Russell called a “logistics” type of area, so there could be several different companies involved. Russell said there would be loading jobs, railroad jobs, security jobs and also opportunities in light manufacturing with the hub if it became a reality.

“What could come out of it could be unbelievable and astronomical for the area,” he said.

Next week, more details will be hammered out with Kansas City Southern Railroad and the developer about more on the financial details about the facility and how it would be handled, he said.

He said Jersey County fits perfectly in the scheme for the rail company because there aren’t environmental issues. A major highway will come through and intersect with all other major interstates and with that, the area would not be congested.

“There is easy, in-and-out access,” Russell said.

Mayor Russell said the immediate highway need would be finishing U.S. Route 67 to Jerseyville and creating the bypass around the city. He added: “they wouldn’t be able to stop there,” in regard to expanding the highway to four lanes.