

Infrastructure investment essential for long-range job growth

by Mark Harms

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This is a critical time for transportation infrastructure in our state, and the Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois is encouraged that the message seems to be resonating with our leadership in Springfield.

On May 5th the Illinois Department of Transportation, led by Secretary Randy Blumhagen, held a listening tour in Collinsville and in Godfrey. The tour stops were just two of many held across the state. Local officials and residents were asked to weigh-in on what good infrastructure means to their communities. Both sessions were well attended, with a host of projects discussed.

In Southwestern Illinois, we are blessed with exceptional location (we have been a trading post for hundreds of years), and our multi-modal infrastructure includes 6 class 1 railroads, 3 airports, the northern-most lock-free, ice-free, port on the Mississippi River, great access and good road and transit systems. We are also fortunate to have abundant, affordable property ripe for development adjacent to these facilities. Many studies are predicting significant growth in freight in the next decade. While we have already

experienced economic growth at Gateway Commerce Center and in industrial areas up and down the Rte. 3 corridor, we need to be attractive for further investment in response to the increasing demand.

Infrastructure is a key economic driver and we urge continued investment for long-range job growth. The ability to maintain our current system is imperative; however, rising costs and limited revenues present serious concerns. Further, we believe investing our tax dollars in multi-modal infrastructure enhancements to support long-range job growth in logistics and manufacturing is also an imperative. The newly formed St. Louis Freight District will focus on opportunities to improve our competitive position nationally and we must be prepared to help fund infrastructure improvements that will benefit our economy.

We appreciate IDOT taking the time to hear about our transportation needs. But now we need to act. The Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois is a member of the Transportation for Illinois Coalition, and we stand together, ready to work with our legislators and the Governor to approve a long-term, stable and secure plan to fund investments for our multi-modal infrastructure to provide a strong path forward for job growth in Southwestern Illinois.

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Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois