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Iowa, Wis., Ill. leaders team up in search for transportation funds

By Thomas V. Bona

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A four-lane U.S. 20 from Freeport to Dubuque, Iowa. A bypass around the west side of Rockford and Beloit. Rebuilt and widened Interstates 90 and 43 in southern Wisconsin. A new Illinois Tollway interchange at Perry Creek Parkway in Rockford.

Those are some of the key priorities of a group of Illinois, Wisconsin and Iowa leaders that will meet Monday in a first-ever Tri-State Alliance summit in Freeport.

More than 300 government, transportation, economic development and business leaders are expected to attend the event. They'll talk about ways to get federal and state money over the next decade to fund key projects.

"They want to see regions working together. They don't want to see individual cities coming at them," said Janyce Fadden, president of the Rockford Area Economic Development Council and member of the summit's steering committee. "It really makes the senators' and congressmen's jobs easier because we're speaking with one voice."

The details

What: Tri-State Alliance regional summit, a meeting of leaders from Illinois, Wisconsin and Iowa to discuss transportation projects and funding.

When: 9 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. Monday.

Where: Freeport Masonic Temple, 305 W. Stephenson

The goal of the summit is to get more regional money from the 2010 federal transportation bill, as well as from state legislatures looking into the next 10 years.

Cost: \$35, including lunch
To register: Online at tristatealliance.com or 815-987-8100.

State and federal officials will talk about ways to do that, and will encourage the region to work together to promote its priorities.

Local members of the steering committee include the Rockford Area Transportation Study; the Rockford and Freeport chambers of commerce; Growth Dimensions of Belvidere and Boone County; the Beloit and Rochelle economic development corporations; the Northwest Illinois Development Alliance and WREX-13.

The summit is modeled after a series of meetings between Illinois, Iowa and Missouri officials in the Quincy area that helped that region win money for numerous projects.

Other projects named by the alliance include restoring Amtrak between Chicago, Rockford and Dubuque; an Irene Road tollway interchange in Belvidere; a tollway interchange west of Rochelle and a wider Illinois 173 in Machesney Park.

“This isn’t a wish-list, this is a priority list,” Einar Forsman said. “U.S. 20 will be there, Amtrak will be there, things will be there until they’re done.”

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