

City gets the slip on stimulus dollars

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By Magdalene Landegent

A rail extension in Le Mars' industrial park won't be paid for with federal stimulus dollars.

Tuesday, an announcement from Governor Chet Culver's office listed the recipients of a total of \$5 million in rail transportation projects in Iowa.

Le Mars' rail spur project didn't make the list.

The \$773,582 project, already bid to a contractor, will be paid for instead by Tax Increment Financing (TIF) dollars, at least initially.

"Ultimately, our first choice would be to pay for the project with money from lot sales in Killeas and Le Mars industrial parks," said City Administrator Scott Langel.

The cost not covered by land sale revenue will be paid for with TIF dollars, he said.

When complete -- an estimated finish date is Aug. 15 -- the rail spur will serve at least three firms in the industrial park: IML Container Iowa, Nor-Am Cold Storage and Le Mars Public Storage.

The contractor on the project, with the lowest bid out of 11 contractors, is Ameritrack Railroad Contractors, of Frankfort, Ind.

"We got very competitive bids," Langel said.

He plans to follow up with his contact at the Iowa Department of Transportation as to how Le Mars ranked among the others applying for stimulus dollars.

According to Langel, 33 Iowa communities applied for a piece of the \$5 million of federal stimulus money available for Iowa rail projects. A total of \$48 million was requested.

The dollars were awarded to the following projects:

Clinton Regional Development Corporation will receive \$2 million to build rail access into an industrial park, and add passing track that facilitates switching. This will help the community attract rail transportation-dependent industries to the area.

The City of Keokuk will receive \$235,800 to update electrical components on the 1913 Mississippi River bridge that serves the city. This will help improve the reliability of rail traffic, and increase efficiency by allowing more trains to utilize the bridge.

Iowa Interstate Railroad Intermodal Facility in Council Bluffs will receive \$2 million to upgrade and improve efficiency. Improvements include a drainage system, paving and track rehabilitation to enhance customer service and serve additional markets.

D & W Railroad will receive \$764,200 to upgrade up to nine railroad bridges between Dewar and Oelwein, enhancing safety and allowing for increased weight capacity.

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