



## NEWS ARTICLE

Tri-State Development Summit  
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### **Dignitaries celebrate next step toward Macomb bypass completion**

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MACOMB, Ill. — What is regarded as the largest unfinished section of the Chicago-Kansas City Expressway drew one important step closer to fruition on a hot, muggy Saturday afternoon.

Ground was broken on the Ill. 336/U.S. 136 overpass on the southwest edge of Macomb, a project that is scheduled for completion by spring of 2013. Other parts of the bypass project will be completed as early as this fall.

The groundbreaking was attended by a collection of state, regional and local dignitaries.

"This project is critical for economical development and travel efficiency," said Ann Schneider, secretary of the Illinois Department of Transportation. "This project will create jobs and improve connectivity."

The bypass project is tied to a \$31 billion capital plan from 2009. The bypass, estimated to cost between \$143 million and \$154 million, is designed to create a new four-lane, divided highway carrying Ill. 336 around the northwest side of Macomb, completing the Illinois portion of the Chicago to Kansas City Expressway that will use parts of four-lane freeways and expressways across the northern part of the state.

Ill. 336 will extend from U.S. 136 on the west edge of Macomb to the north and east to tie into U.S. 67, north of Hospital Road.

Sen. John Sullivan, D-Rushville, and Schneider both said this project is an example of elected officials putting their political differences aside and bringing to life an economic boost for an entire area of the state.

"This is proof great things can be accomplished," Schneider said. "We'll be moving dirt and creating jobs."

Construction on this leg of the bypass project will officially begin Thursday.

Sullivan also paid special thanks to Thomas A. Oakley, publisher of The Herald-Whig and who Ill. 336 was named after Sept. 1, 2009. Sullivan left the podium to shake Oakley's hand, who was seated in the audience.

Oakley, a member of the Tri-State Development Summit Transportation Task Force, has worked for more than 50 years to promote transportation projects that attract and support business investment and produce employment opportunities, designed to enhance a higher quality of life throughout region.

One of the chief benefits of the Macomb bypass project will be speedier travel along the Chicago to Kansas City Expressway. As truckers and other travelers take the existing route, they have to make their way through the streets in Macomb and contend with stoplights. Completion of the bypass will make the route more attractive.

"This will (eventually) lessen the traffic congestion in Macomb," Schneider said.

A Chicago-Kansas City Expressway Association is being developed to awareness of the corridor and build traffic counts.

Efforts to construct a direct route from Chicago to Kansas City have been in the planning stages since its exclusion from the Interstate Highway System in the 1950s. Much of the effort has been fueled over the years by the Tri-State Development Summit, an economic development group anchored in West Central-Illinois, Northeast Missouri and southeastern Iowa.

"It's an amazing day," said Rep. Jil Tracy, R-Quincy. "We need this four-lane highway and the connections to get this state back on track."

Mayor Michael J. Inman of Macomb was ecstatic.

"We understand the importance of infrastructure," he said. "We are already experiencing some of the benefits of just the talk about this project."

Inman said at least one local business is planning a multi-million dollar expansion because of the bypass project and its eventual impact.

"Illinois is the transportation hub of the country, and we are fortunate to have that status," Schneider said. "This project begins the final link in a series of actions connecting western Illinois and the communities of Quincy, Macomb, Monmouth, Galesburg and other areas of northern and central Illinois."

The economic potential of a Chicago to Kansas City corridor has always been recognized, but has taken decades to move it along — step by step. Saturday's groundbreaking was another of those steps.

The mission of the Tri-State Summit is to bring together leaders in Southeast Iowa, Northeast Missouri and Western Illinois to define common issues; to develop an on-going dialogue to effectively address those issues; and to improve the quality of life of the entire tri-state region through economic development activities.

More information about the Tri-State Development Summit can be found at [www.tristateofmind.org](http://www.tristateofmind.org). ###