

Quinn praises job creation with East Peoria project

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EAST PEORIA — Calling it a "springboard to over \$200 million in development," Gov. Pat Quinn, state transportation officials and local leaders on Tuesday turned dirt on a \$26 million project that will create 300 construction jobs.

The Technology Boulevard and Edmund Street extension will provide access to the former Caterpillar Inc. property in the heart of the metropolitan area. Future redevelopment at the 65-acre brownfield site is expected to create an additional 2,300 jobs, funded by the Illinois Jobs Now! capital construction project.

"Investing and improving our roads and industrial sites creates jobs for the future," Quinn said. "We have to make sure our state is strong when it comes to the economy. The best way to fight poverty, the best way to fight crime, the best way to keep families together is a J-O-B."

In addition to building new roads and a bridge at the property along the Illinois River across from Downtown Peoria, the project will include new storm sewers, water mains, sanitary sewers, intersections and street lighting. R.A. Cullinan & Son Inc. was awarded the \$24 million contract; design and construction engineering was \$2 million.

"This will provide for smooth, safe and convenient access to restaurants, retail shops and for the much-anticipated redevelopment of this brownfield area," said Illinois Transportation Secretary Gary Hanning, adding IDOT has \$5 billion in construction contracts, more than any other construction season in the history of the state.

State Sen. Dave Koehler, D-Peoria, said infrastructure in Illinois received a failing grade. "We are not keeping up," he said, adding the East Peoria project was his top priority for funding, followed by Veterans Drive in Pekin.

Other major projects under way in the area benefiting from state funding include the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria's cancer research center, the Peoria Riverfront Museum and Westlake Hall at Bradley University.

The East Peoria project, slated to be completed in the fall of 2012, consists of relocating a portion of Washington Street, soon to be called Technology Boulevard, the extension of Edmund Street and the completion of widening Camp Street to five lanes.

The Downtown 2010 project aims to transform empty land between West Washington and Camp streets once owned by Caterpillar into a new retail and commercial center. The project is expected to revamp downtown by introducing new shops, restaurants, offices, civic buildings and more. When finished, it will encompass nearly 90 acres of land and is expected to generate \$130 million in new investment.

"Technology Boulevard is becoming the backbone of the future East Peoria downtown. A downtown that will become a destination point where residents can experience a new sense of innovative green urbanism hosting a mecca of activities and regional opportunities that will truly enhance the life of all who reside in East Peoria and our entire region," said East Peoria Mayor Dave Mingus.

From 2009 through the end of this year, Illinois will have invested about \$8 billion to repair or rebuild 4,800 miles of roads and 566 bridges, according to information provided by the governor's office.

Also Tuesday, Quinn saluted those in the health care industry and showed support for the Health Care Council of Illinois' "Care You Can Count On" campaign, recognizing the impact that caregivers have on the personal lives of residents. "We have to make sure we take good care of those who have devoted their lives to the state of Illinois."

About 2,500 people representing more than 150 long-term care facilities are participating in the Illinois Health Care Association Convention and Trade Show taking place through Thursday at the Peoria Civic Center.

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