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## Highway and airport projects improved upon in last five years

By **KEN BLACK**

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Transportation makes the world go around, or at least provides a way to get around the world.

It is perennially a part of the emphasis that local leaders put when lobbying at both the state and federal level.

One of the major successes that happened before the plan was developed was the four-laning of Highway 330 to Des Moines.

While they significantly improve access to that area of the state, there are other challenges that await.

The most significant of those is the lobby for the expansion of U.S. Highway 30. To the west, Highway 30 is two-laned from just past Marshalltown to Colo, a little less than 20 miles. From there, it's four-laned all the way to Boone.

To the east, a four-laned portion has recently been completed from the Meskwaki Casino in Tama County into Marshalltown. From that point, there's a stretch of about 20 miles of two-laned roadway before it expands back to four lanes going into Cedar Rapids.

Some more improvements will be coming soon. The stretch of Highway 30 from State Center to Colo will soon be four laned and a bypass is being planned for the Tama/Toledo area.

Once that happens, the only section from Tama to Ames that will not be four laned is the seven-mile stretch from Marshalltown to State Center. That continues to be left out of the Iowa Department of Transportation's five-year plans.

"That baffles us," said Marshalltown Area Chamber of Commerce President Ken Anderson. "Why wouldn't they put that in there?"



State Highway 330, near the intersection with U.S. Highway 30, was recently four-laned on the stretch from Marshalltown to Des Moines. Better transportation infrastructure was a key element of the five year plan.

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To help not only get that portion done, but others as well, various business and governmental entities are investing \$10,000 in a study that will help illustrate to policymakers in Des Moines how vital a four-laned Highway 30 is to the state's economy.

"We've got to get Highway 30 done," said Joel Akason, president of the Marshall Economic Development Impact Committee. "The importance of Highway 30 cannot be overstated."

Getting highways completed and expanded is an uphill battle, with seemingly endless needs and a short supply of money. The fact that the current environment in the U.S. Congress is moving away from earmarks, special appropriations to specific projects, may not help the cause much.

However, procuring funding for highway projects is not something that normally happens overnight. As an example, the four-laned highway to Des Moines was pointed out.

"That was a 12-year lobbying effort, which is 10 years faster than normal," Anderson said.

But instead of just focusing on improving highways, the five year plan also set out a goal of reviewing the growth potential for the Marshalltown Municipal Airport and making "strategic improvements in order to ensure that facility can become a significant part of the Marshalltown community."

"When new business comes to town, it doesn't come by the Greyhound Bus. It comes through the airport," said Bill Grabe, an architect with Clapsaddle-Garber Associates that does a significant amount of work on airport projects across the state, including Marshalltown.

In the past couple of years, a runway rehabilitation with a project cost of nearly \$1 million was completed, as well as a hangar door replacement, with a cost of \$34,000.

This year, a portion of taxiway will be completed, with a total project cost of \$524,000.

The improvements are welcomed by those who use the airport. One of those is local avaiator Garry Brandenburg, who espouses the benefits of airport.

"I've often heard it said that if you build a mile of roadway, you can go one mile," he recalled. "But if you build a mile of runway, you can go almost anywhere."

What makes those airport projects very attractive from the city's standpoint is that, at least for the major projects, 95 percent of the funding comes from grants obtained at the federal level.

Some local residents may not realize the benefit of the airport in terms of economic development because it may not be used by them, according to Grabe.

"Compared to most of them [in Iowa], it is an active airport," he said. "It is essential to some of our businesses and to attracting new business."

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