

Yager wins bypass extension contract

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

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Yager Materials of Owensboro has been awarded a \$34.2 million contract for the first phase of extending the U.S. 60/U.S. 231 bypass from Kentucky 54 to U.S. 60 East near Hawesway Truck Plaza.

The bid was \$4.9 million less than the state had estimated the project would cost.

"We're very pleased any time something comes in below estimate," said Keith Todd, spokesman for the Kentucky Department of Highways' Madisonville office. "The state's money is tight, and this is always a good sign."

It's also always good to have a local company winning state contracts, said Jody Wassmer, president of the Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce.

Local officials began lobbying for the 4.9-mile four-lane highway in May 1991.

Back then, it was called the "east county connector."

"The key to getting it done is getting it started," Wassmer said. "Six percent of the total stimulus dollars the state got for transportation projects is going to this project."

Everett Green, transportation engineer branch manager for the Kentucky Department of Highways' office in Madisonville, predicted in June that construction could start by September.

He stood by that prediction on Thursday.

Todd said Thursday that a groundbreaking ceremony is being planned with Gov. Steve Beshear. A date has not yet been set, he said.

Wassmer said he expects the groundbreaking to come in the first half of September. But dirt might already be turning before then, he said.

"I think the governor coming here to do that is indicative of how important this project is," Wassmer said.

Green said the first section of the project includes two sections -- from Kentucky 144 to U.S. 60 East by Hawesway Truck Plaza and a connector road between Kentucky 54 and Pleasant Valley Road.

That connector will serve the new \$400 million-plus hospital that Owensboro Medical Health System plans to build between Pleasant Valley Road and Daniels Lane until the entire road is completed.

The first phase of the bypass extension is scheduled for completion in 2011.

But Green said the section of the new bypass between Kentucky 144 and Kentucky 54 is still "funding-dependent."

The first section, he said, is being built with federal stimulus money. But the final phase still hasn't been funded.

It is, however, in the state's six-year road plan, Wassmer said.

He said the chamber will continue pushing for the money to finish the highway.

Now that the state has committed more than \$34 million to the project, it is more likely to complete the work, Wassmer said.

Green said the state will continue purchasing rights of way for the second phase of the project and will move utilities. But construction of that section of the road can't start until funding is appropriated, he said.

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