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(Neb.)-Bridge Projects Abound In Dawes County

By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 02/05/2013 04:16 PM

Photo: Dawes County roads superintendent Larry Hankin discusses an engineering proposal for two bridge projects with county commissioners Stacy Swinney, Webb Johnson, and Jake Stewart, and county clerk Cheryl Feist. (Photo by KCSR-Roxie Graham-Marski)

(DAWES COUNTY)-There are quite a few bridge projects in the works right now in Dawes County. Roads superintendent Larry Hankin spoke with the Dawes County Board of Commissioners at their meeting Tuesday morning about an engineering proposal for two bridge projects on Bethel Loop Road. McCaslin Consulting out of Scottsbluff submitted the proposal in late January, which offers to provide field surveying and electronic design and drafting, including proposed roadway alignment options and final design plans, for a total cost of $16,900. The cost does not include any additional services that may arise.

The commissioners decided to amend the proposal to include that additional services and their costs need to be discussed with and approved by the commissioners before services are rendered. The board also decided to broaden the proposal to include an estimate on compaction monitoring and a final inspection of the project.

The board has budgeted money for the bridge repairs and has already purchased culverts as well. During the fires of 2012, commissioner Stacy Swinney says the county had some issues with the bridges, which are made of wood and are about a mile apart from each other, because the tonnage ratings were not enough to properly support fire equipment vehicles.

Another bridge project, slated for the Sand Draw Bridge on the way to Toadstool Geological Park, will be handled by the state this fiscal year with mostly federal funds.The state has federal money earmarked for projects such as this. Swinney says the state said there will be some kind a match requirement, but the county is not sure what that will be. Whatever the case, Swinney says "it is almost a freebie for us," as the state will be responsible for the engineering and basically everything, leaving very little for the county to do. Swinney says the bridge has been in need of repairs for a long time. The state is expected to put the project into motion pretty quickly.

The commissioners are still looking at all options toward funding the Bethel Road Bridge south of Whitney. Approximately $300,000 was budgeted for that project, but all bids came back at closer to $400,000. Swinney

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says the board feels the project is reasonably budgeted, and projects can only be completed as money allows, so that bridge is an ongoing issue. He says there is a bill in the state legislature currently that would increase the maximum amount on county projects without bids from $60,000 to $160,000, which would give counties more negotiating authority and flexibility. Another possibility the county may consider is a pre-designed superstructure that is already designed and rated, which Swinney says would help save engineering and other overhead costs.

(Questions? Comments? E-mail roxie@chadrad.com.)
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