

Around Route 53



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MoDOT Plans Route 53 Improvements

A new and improved Route 53 is on the way. MoDOT is continuing preliminary work on 33 miles of improvements to Route 53 in Butler and Dunklin Counties.

The work includes mostly resurfacing and adding shoulders where needed between Poplar Bluff and Holcomb.

"We plan on holding a public hearing about the improvements in the future; however, right now, our design team is looking at the route," says Project Manager Eric Krapf. "There are preliminary items to be dealt with before we get to the point where

we go to the public and gather input."

The first portion scheduled for work is located between Qulin and Campbell. Krapf says this starting place was chosen based on accident data and pavement condition. Keep reading *Around Route 53* for the latest about future meetings.



Route 53 Facts

What's the project? MoDOT plans to resurface and add shoulders between Poplar Bluff and Holcomb

Qulin-Campbell--Construction 2008

Poplar Bluff-Qulin--Construction 2010

Campbell-Holcomb--Construction 2010

Project Manager Eric Krapf



Since last we spoke, I've been blessed with the birth of my second child. It's been quite an exciting time as my wife and I have been getting used to losing sleep with not just one, but two small children.

I'm adapting and have even recently taken up coffee. It's not really as bad as I always thought, especially after spending a lot of my night feeding the most precious little girl in Southeast Missouri. Sorry to brag folks, but I'm sure you understand.

We've also been busy on another project... continuing to improve Route 53 for your family. If you have any questions about these future improvements, contact me at (573) 472-5261 or toll-free at 1-888-ASK-MODOT (1-888-275-6636). My e-mail is eric.krapf@modot.mo.gov.

I look forward to working together on Route 53.

***Around Route 53* is a publication to keep you informed of upcoming transportation work and share information about the corridor.**

If you know someone who should be receiving this publication, contact MoDOT at 1-888-ASK-MODOT (1-888-275-6636) or www.modot.org/southeast.

Campbell Student Meets History Challenge

In our first issue of *Around Route 53*, we reported that the town of Gibson, Mo., was a stub on the online encyclopedia Wikipedia. That means that there was little information about the town available. The unique thing about Wikipedia is that it's a community encyclopedia, meaning that anyone can post information they have regarding any topic.

We knew there was someone out there who had information about Gibson, so we set out to find him or her. Ms. Sherry Green, the social studies teacher at Campbell Elementary, put the challenge to her students, and Dylan Thompson took her up on it.

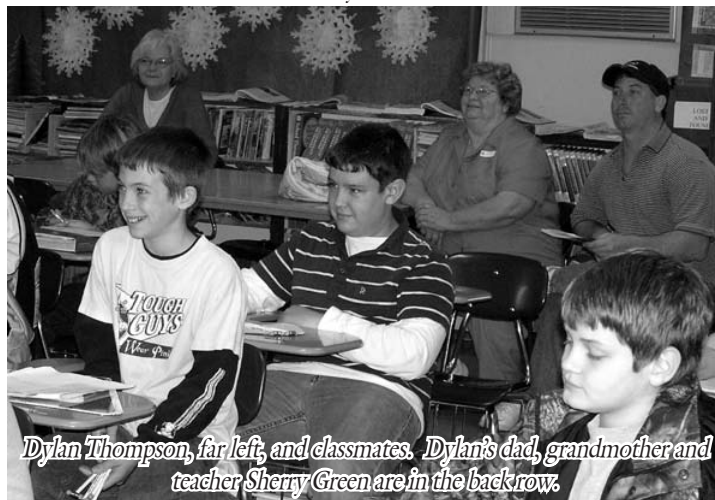
Dylan's grandmother is the postmaster at Gibson, and he knew she'd be a good resource. So, Dylan set out to research how his hometown came to be and any interesting information he could find to share with us.

Project Manager Eric Krapf visited with Dylan's class to talk about

transportation and its impact on communities and to hear what Dylan discovered about Gibson.



Above: Project Manager Eric Krapf discusses transportation with Dylan's class.



Dylan Thompson, far left, and classmates. Dylan's dad, grandmother and teacher Sherry Green are in the back row.

visitors can learn about the town.

For more on Dylan's research, read all about Gibson on page 3.

"I was most surprised that Gibson used to be a lot bigger than it is now," says Dylan.

The class had been studying transportation corridors, and Krapf explained just how those corridors affected the towns along them.

"When Gibson was founded it had something very important then that it doesn't today," Krapf explained, and the students knew exactly what he was referring to.

"The railroad helped create a lot of our little towns in Southeast Missouri. That's an excellent example of how important transportation is to a town. Business and commerce look for good transportation corridors, and that's why good roads and railroads and ports are so important to a city's continued growth.

Dylan's grandmother, Margaret, told him he wasn't the only one interested in the town's heritage. A book on the history of Gibson is in the works written by Burl Parsons. Dylan's own information has been added to Wikipedia so that all

Gibson, Missouri Knows Its History

Gibson, Mo., was platted on Oct. 20, 1890 and organized in 1891. In its early days, it was the railroad that made the town. The first train to

Gibson made its stop on Dec. 20, 1890. It was part of Louis Houck's Missouri and Arkansas Railroad Company. The line extended from Cape Girardeau with connections in St. Louis, Kennett and Gibson.

The line had two passenger trains per day. It was most often referred to as the Houck Road and later became known as the Ham Train, after one of the conductors who lived in Campbell.

The town was incorporated on August 4, 1902. Voters elected five trustees, who elected one of the trustees to serve as chairman.

The trustees were responsible for appointing a town clerk, marshal, collector, treasurer and street commissioner. The town's first mayor was David C. Pollock.

Gibson was originally called Canaan Island. It included what locals know today as North Canaan, South Canaan and Gibson.

Gibson, named after one of the first families, later became the

name of all the areas, totaling 160 acres.

Gibson's early days in-

cluded a railroad station, sawmill, cotton gin, grist mill, a grocery store, a church and a schoolhouse. Farming was one of the townspeople's leading busi-

nesses.

The town continued to grow, and in a few years, Gibson had a drug store, physician, two lodges, a barber shop, blacksmith shop, three general stores and two car dealerships.

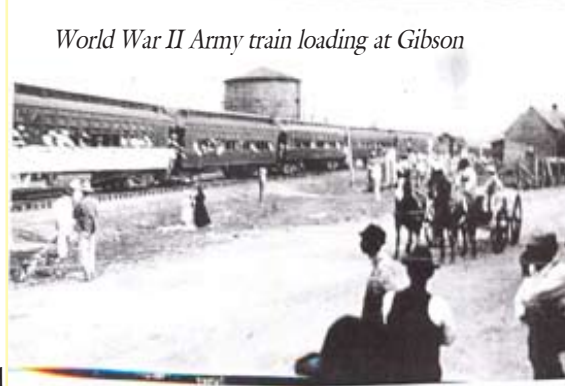
Not only a leader in commerce, Gibson even had two local baseball teams, the Gibson Grinnel Eaters and the Canaan Islanders.

Gibson has changed greatly over the years from a bustling railroad town to a quiet farming community. As things have grown and declined, Gibson remains one of Southeast Missouri's most successful communities because of its people. And, whatever commerce or transportation

comes its way, it is always the people who determine what a town will be.



Louis Houck



World War II Army train loading at Gibson



Railroad Seasonal Crew

Route 53 Reflection

While the people who live along Route 53 know the importance of the route and where it's going both literally and figuratively, the people chosen to represent residents also know all too well just how valuable a corridor is.

Sen. Rob Mayer understands that every road in his 25th Senatorial District is a road to somebody's home or to somebody's job. That's why he says transportation improvements and maintenance are vital to the folks of Southeast Missouri.

"Route 53 is a major route that connects communities in the Bootheel," Mayer says. These communities are connected with Poplar Bluff and offer access to northern and western routes."

Mayer says many people use Route 53 to get to the industrial park where they work, and that it is used extensively by the agriculture industry.

"It's a major route in our area that needs to be taken care of to keep commerce moving along," he says.

Previous pages of the newsletter have documented just how important a developing trans-

with Senator Rob Mayer

portation system is to the vitality of the towns it connects. Route 53 is no different. But for all the talk of commerce and economic development, the Senator says his biggest concern is elsewhere.

"Route 53 obviously provides a thoroughfare for folks from Kennett in Dunklin County into Butler County and beyond. But, my biggest hope for this corridor and for this project is that it brings greater safety for motorists traveling the route. It is a key concern of mine, and I hope the project can be completed as quickly as possible," Mayer says.

Mayer also understands that Southeast Missouri needs aren't the only transportation needs throughout the state. Each region has its Route 53 and more. Balancing all those needs with limited funding is a challenge not just for MoDOT but also for all legislators who must convey their constituents' needs with what can be done. It's a big task that Sen. Mayer says he works through much like MoDOT's project teams.

"There are a lot of things that you have to consider when it comes to highways. At the top is safety concerns. What can we do to improve it and maintain it in a safe way for drivers? We also have to look at the amount of traffic that uses the route and how it impacts and improves



commerce in the area," he says.

But, for all of the reflection on the history of Route 53 and the region, it's all for

nought but for the future. Mayer says his hopes are bright for the future of Southeast Missouri's transportation system.

"There's several things I'm excited about and see happening in Southeast Missouri. Highway 60 is very important to our area. I recognize with the expansion of Route 67 that it will be a great boost to not only Madison, Wayne, and Butler Counties, but to all of the South-

east Missouri region. I want to see us continue to make improvements and maintain Interstate 55 and Route 412 in the Bootheel. And, our lettered highways are important as well. They do provide transportation in the rural areas to get to work and for farmers to move commodities back and

forth to market," he says.

