

Around Route 53



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MoDOT Plans Route 53 Improvements

The first portion of improvements to 33 miles of Route 53 in Butler and Dunklin Counties will hopefully be under contract by the end of the year.

The first portion scheduled for work is located between Qulin and Campbell. MoDOT is hoping to accept bids on the work this November. If bids are favorable, the project could be awarded during the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission's December meeting. Construction would get underway in spring 2008.

The work includes mostly resurfacing and adding shoulders where needed. That being said, the work will impact your travel as traffic will be

reduced to one lane during resurfacing. We urge drivers to be careful, prepare for possible delays and slower speeds, and remember that it will be a short-term inconvenience for a smoother road on which to travel.



Project Manager Eric Krapf



So, it got really warm, and my family and I decided to plant our garden. Let me tell you, planting a garden may be a challenge, but when you add planting a garden with a two-year old, you've really raised the level of difficulty and, at the same time, enjoyment. Which is fortunate, because as you know, then it got really cold. And, we've had to relive all that enjoyment again. It would be easy to be frustrated with the weather and all the hard work that was lost, but I decided to be thankful that I got to have that experience with my son again.

I'm hoping you have similar feelings next spring because to make improvements to Route 53, we may be raising your level of difficulty in travel. We'll be asking that you share the road with crews working to improve your travel. And while it may be frustrating, we're hoping the end result will bring you a more enjoyable driving experience.

As always, call if you have questions or concerns, my info is to the left. I look forward to visiting with you.

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

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

If you have questions or concerns, contact Project Manager Eric Krapf at 1-888-ASK-MODOT (1-888-275-6636) or eric.krapf@modot.mo.gov.

When Will I Really Ever Use Algebra In Life?

That was just the question Holcomb High School students posed to MoDOT Project Manager Eric Krapf. Krapf visited with the Algebra I and II classes recently to discuss the Route 53 project, engineering, MoDOT and how math factors into his job on a daily basis.

"It's important that they understand that the things they are learning at this young age does matter later in life," says Krapf. "I wanted to show them that there is a real life use for what they're being taught and hopefully get them a little more interested in both the subject matter and engineering."

None of the students at the presentation personally knew an engineer they told Krapf, but a few said it was a field in which they were interested. Krapf told the classes about the upcoming work they could expect to see on Route 53.

"The project will be something they'll see for a couple of years as it is constructed. I think it is important to engage stu-

dents at all age levels on what's happening with the trans-



Project Manager Eric Krapf discusses transportation with Holcomb High School students.



portant to know that what you are doing is truly worthwhile."

portation in their community and what impacts and importance that transportation means to their community. We had a great discussion about transportation with the middle school students in Campbell last year, and I hope this is something we can continue with the schools along Route 53 as the project progresses."

He used a project completed last year to demonstrate the need for math in his job. From the water flow in a ditch to how high bridge rails need be to stop vehicles at differing speeds, Krapf told the students how what

they are learning now is the foundation for much of his work on every project. Did you like math in school one student asked.

"I don't know that any normal person *likes* school," he answered getting laughs from the students. "Sure, we'd all rather be out doing something else, but I was good at it. And, what I learned then allows me to work somewhere now that really makes a difference. At the end of the day, that's im-

Qulin, Missouri **A Town By Any Other Name ...**

Qulin, Mo., has had its share of names, and even more stories about how it finally came to be known as Qulin.

The railroad came to the city in 1903, and by 1918, around a thousand people lived in present-day Qulin. The town got its start, as many along Route 53 did, with timber. As folks moved into work in the timber industry, one story claims Qulin began as Ragtown because everyone lived in tents.

The area was also known as the "Swamps," and contained mainly oak, hickory and cypress. Those who worked in the timber industry cut these trees which were often six-to-seven feet in diameter at the base and as tall as 125 feet.

Besides nicknames, Qulin's original name was Melville, but it was forced to change by the post office because a Mehlville already existed near St. Louis. Just how Melville became Qulin has many theories.

One theory says that the town decided to honor one of its earliest settlers, Alfred Kelley, by allowing him to select the name.

Kelley wanted the town to be named Quincey after his daughter. Quincey

didn't please the post office much more than Melville had because a Quincy already existed in Missouri. Kelley decided to modify Quincey by dropping the CY and adding an L, hoping Qulin wasn't already taken.

Another popular theory is that Kelley came up with name by taking the first letters of his five daughters' names ... Quincey, Unice and history has lost the other girls' names.

Another theory has the town named thanks to the railroad. Railroad spurs into the forest, where most people worked, were given letter names such as A-line, B-line, etc. The line near

present day Qulin was named Q-line.

Regardless how the name developed, it could have just as easily been called Dodge City. The Missouri General Assembly had passed a law allowing counties to determine if they wanted to be dry or wet. Butler County decided to allow the sales of alcohol, but its three neighboring counties of Stoddard, Dunklin and Clay County were dry. Kilgore's Distillery was located in Qulin, as were several saloons. The result: people from surrounding

counties visited the town to drink and gamble.

The town saw its share of trouble and gunfights right on Front Street. A marshal was hired, and from 1914-1918, Texas Jack kept things lawful and became famous for making 36 arrests



in one day for drinking, fighting and killing.

Sometime during World War II, the railroad put on a show for the town. While most people were watching, the distillery, flour mill and hotel were burned to the ground. Wheat separators were also sabotaged by placing dynamite caps in the wheat shocks around Qulin. The town blamed the nearby communities of Glennonville and Corola, but never knew for sure who had done it. Committed that it wouldn't become a victim again, the town formed the Qulin Vigilantes with men patrolling the town each night.

Qulin's changed a lot over the years. Timber proved not to be a continuous resource. The St. Francis Flood Control District was established and more than 200 miles of ditches and 50 miles of levees were created to help drain the land for agriculture, now the area's top industry.

Gun fights on main street are also a thing of the past, and today Qulin is known as a nice, quiet community of 467 people who celebrated its centennial in 2004.



Route 53 Priorities

with the Bootheel Regional Planning Commission

Route 53 may be a state route through rural Southeast Missouri, but to the folks who drive it everyday it's a main thoroughfare, connecting communities and economies. No one knows that more than the Bootheel Regional Planning Commission. The group understands just how important Route 53 is and what its future should hold.

"Route 53 carries around 3,500 vehicles daily northwest of Campbell and increases to about 10,000 average daily traffic southeast of Poplar Bluff," says Bootheel RPC Director Steve Duke. "Enhanced safety is one of the Bootheel Regional Planning Commission's Transportation Advisory Committee goals, and this project will enhance safety for the users of this route."

Transportation and economic development are themes that go hand in hand. The strong connection leads anyone to argue that for a community to thrive economically, it must first

have adequate, safe transportation for its workers and shipment of goods.

"The dominant industries in the region are manufacturing, agriculture and tourism. Route 53 is one of several transportation delivery systems in

our region that is necessary for these industries to grow and support all economic development activities," says Duke.

Duke also says that planning for future growth isn't enough. Improvements need immediacy.

"The future is now and attracting new jobs and retaining jobs is vital to the Bootheel region,"

he says. "Tourism is a growing industry in the region, and we see signs of the smaller communities taking advantage of this growth."

Duke also says that forward thinking and success are a direct result of those leading the communities.

"The towns in the Bootheel will survive with good leadership like Mayor Gunter in



the City of Campbell. The city officials of the towns in the Bootheel work very hard to improve the quality of life of the people they represent," he says.

One of the largest concerns for any community is developing opportunities to attract and keep residents in the region.

"The 'people are going' and finding ways to keep our young people home or return after graduation from college is the challenge, but the glass is half full. Leadership is the foundation of community and economic development. Without an efficient transportation system economic development is unlikely to occur," says Duke.

He says while the RPC is mindful of just how important Route 53 improvements are to the region and how great the impacts could be on the communities, he has just one hope as the project progresses.

"Delivery of the project on time and under budget."

