

HIGHWAY COMMITTEE MINUTES

DATE: March 12, 2024
LOCATION: Kendall County Highway Department
MEMBERS PRESENT: Zach Bachmann, Brian DeBolt, Scott Gengler, & Ruben Rodriguez
STAFF PRESENT: Michele Riley and Francis Klaas
ALSO PRESENT:

The committee meeting convened at 3:35 P.M. with roll call of committee members. Koukol absent. Quorum established.

Motion DeBolt; second Gengler to approve the agenda as presented. Motion approved unanimously.

Motion DeBolt; second Rodriguez, to approve the Highway Committee minutes from February 13, 2024. Motion approved unanimously.

Klaas reported that the Highway Department has 3 pickup trucks that will no longer be needed when 4 new pickups are purchased this year from Gjovik's. The old trucks include 2 diesel crew cabs and one 4-wheel drive pickup with a regular cab and an 8' box. DeBolt stated that the Forest Preserve was interested in the 4-wheel drive pickup. Bachmann confirmed that he had spoken with Antionette and the Forest Preserve wanted the 4-wheel drive pickup because they wanted to use it for snow plowing. DeBolt asked if it came with a plow or if the Highway Department had one. Klaas stated that it did not have a plow. Gengler asked about the other two diesel trucks, and whether they were earmarked for other departments. Bachmann indicated that Facilities Management was interested in the other two trucks. DeBolt noted that Christina – the County Administrator – was working on a policy for disposing of county equipment.

Bachmann introduced the idea of an intersection safety matrix. In an effort to further intersection safety, the County was looking for a way to assess whether certain intersections should receive specific safety improvements, based on actual data. The idea included public accessibility and transparency in identifying locations that might receive safety upgrades. Bachmann reported that he and the county engineer had met with the State's Attorney and Jim Webb to discuss the idea of implementing a safety matrix. Concerns included the potential for additional liability if implementing the matrix required additional responsibilities. He thought that – legally speaking – the county wouldn't be taking on any additional liability for doing things that are above and beyond the minimum requirements. He thought that it was really up to the local jurisdiction – the Highway Department – to determine what improvements are made at what intersections. DeBolt expressed concern about reacting to fatal crashes and then having another fatal crash at an intersection nearby. Bachmann was optimistic that this would be well received if the public had input. He also emphasized that the process should be flexible and should allow safety upgrades to be done at the County's discretion. Finally, the discussion with the State's Attorney resulted in the idea of adopting the safety matrix as an internal policy... thus helping to avoid additional liability.

DeBolt brought up some safety concerns about the intersection of Little Rock Road and Abe Street, by the Plano High School. He indicated that there have been numerous wrecks and near misses at this intersection. Klaas provided some history about this intersection. Several years ago, the County had initiated engineering to construct a roundabout at this intersection. County spent a large amount of time and money developing plans for the roundabout. When it came time to approve the project and appropriate the money for construction, the County Board declined to approve the project. Plans have been sitting on the shelf ever since. DeBolt reiterated that there had been lots of crashes. When he was a captain at the fire department, he had cut a lot of people out of cars. But he indicated that the City of Plano would like to put up blinking stop signs at the intersection. Klaas indicated that there are 3 jurisdictions at the intersection. County has Little Rock Road, the City has Creek Road, and Little Rock Township has Abe Street. DeBolt emphasized how much traffic was at the intersection, especially during sporting events, as well as all the inexperienced drivers coming from the high school. He also discussed some of the same problems on Ben Street at School Street, where drivers don't obey the stop signs. Rodriguez asked how the Little Rock – Abe Street intersection would fit into the safety matrix. Klaas didn't know because that intersection has not been studied, but indicated that he was now curious to look at the numbers. Upon further discussion, the committee was in favor of working with the City of Plano to perhaps share the cost of installing blinker stop signs. Klaas added that if the County Board thought it was now appropriate to build a roundabout at this intersection, it would be important to get that project into the 5-Year Plan, because it takes so long to get a project to construction. Committee then discussed the tragic semi and bus crash near Rushville, Illinois in which several fatalities occurred.

Bachmann concluded that the main purpose of bringing the idea of a safety matrix to the committee was to advocate for safety and to approach it like a townhall-type situation where input from the public would be valued, but it would be at the County's discretion what type of improvements are made. He also re-emphasized the importance of keeping the policy flexible as we go forward. Rodriguez suggested that the GIS Department might be able to assist in assigning data to all the different intersections. Klaas reminded the committee that the triggers for the safety matrix are based on traffic volume and 5-year crash data... items which are constantly changing. Rodriguez, who has significant experience in this area, thought that GIS might still be able to assist, as they deal with data that is changing all the time. DeBolt asked how many intersections the County had. Bachmann thought it was right around 200. He also thought the idea of involving GIS was a good one and ties into the idea that this safety matrix is adaptable.

Gengler left the meeting at approximately 3:55 PM.

Motion DeBolt; second Rodriguez to recommend approval of authorization for Francis C. Klaas to enter into contracts, including joint participation agreements, on behalf of Kendall County with the State of Illinois and any of its agencies or departments. Klaas indicated that this action is now required to sign bulk rock salt requisitions with Central Management Services. Said agency has never required this before; but for 2024/2025, they will require a signed joint participation agreement as part of their salt bid. Bachmann summarized this action as allowing the County Engineer to do something that he has been doing for many years. Rodriguez wondered if there was any risk in taking this action. Klaas did not think so. As long as the County takes delivery of the salt that we promise we will buy, there is really no risk. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Motion Rodriguez; second DeBolt to recommend approval of a resolution appropriating funds for the payment of the county engineer's salary. Klaas reminded the committee that this action has to be taken every year in order to stay in the County Engineer's Salary Program. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Under the Chairman's Report, Bachmann again discussed the implementation of a safety matrix for intersections. He indicated that the formal approval might be a month or two away. The committee discussed some of the numbers for the highest accident intersections in the County, which had been reviewed previously by the committee. DeBolt was surprised by the volume of traffic at some of the county intersections. Bachmann encouraged committee members to provide additional feedback as we move forward with the idea of a safety matrix.

Motion Rodriguez; second DeBolt to forward Highway Department bills for the month of March in the amount of \$72,873.03 to the Finance Committee for approval.

Motion DeBolt; second Rodriguez to adjourn the meeting at 4:10 PM. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Francis C. Klaas, P.E.
Kendall County Engineer

Action Items

1. Authorization for Francis C. Klaas to enter into contracts, including joint participation agreements, on behalf of Kendall County with the State of Illinois and any of its agencies or departments
2. Resolution appropriating funds for the payment of the county engineer's salary