

Heartland Parkway

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A four-lane corridor through Taylor County, connecting Springfield's Bluegrass Parkway to Columbia's Louie Nunn Parkway, is a little closer to reality.

The U.S. House of Representatives passed transportation funding legislation on Tuesday that includes \$500,000 to study the proposed Heartland Parkway.

"Support has been building across the area for developing KY 55 into a four-lane parkway," Rep. Ron Lewis stated in a press release, "and the access it would provide to the existing parkways and the interstates would certainly be an asset for the future of this region.

"I am pleased the Appropriations Committee agreed to direct some money to look more closely at this proposal."

John Chowning, chairman of the Campbellsville/Taylor County Industrial Authority board, said that funds in the bill would help begin the planning process, paying for feasibility, preliminary engineering and environmental studies.

"This is the first step in a long-term process toward the four-lane corridor we call the Heartland Parkway," Chowning said.

Traditionally, when Congress earmarks money for certain projects, he said, Congress will fund the project through completion.

The proposed corridor will run from Washington County through Marion and Taylor counties, ending in Adair County. Chowning said that other counties along the way -- such as Green, Nelson, Cumberland and Metcalfe -- will benefit from the parkway and have lent their support to the project. All are members of a task force promoting the proposed highway.

"We are very pleased with the House action," Chowning said. "We're building a gradual base of support.

"This corridor is very important to economic development and tourism efforts ... opening up a gateway to Green River Lake could only benefit the proposal for a lodge.

"The bottom line is that it's the first step -- a significant first step."

The House legislation is the beginning of final approval of the money in the annual federal budget.

The Senate has not yet considered its Transportation budget for this year. Any differences between the House and Senate bills will have to be worked through before the legislation goes to President George W. Bush for his signature.