

Highway 34

Thank you, Senators for taking the time to host this hearing today to learn about the needs here in central and west central Illinois. Mayor Inman, thank you for giving up part of your time to allow me to speak today on behalf of all the groups that are here in support of the Highway 34 project that is long overdue. (Please Stand) There has been a significant effort for over 25 years to get the Highway 34 project done. It has been seriously needed for decades.

The 27 mile stretch of road between Monmouth and Burlington the Illinois State Police have called this the “most dangerous stretch of highway” that they patrol. According to IDOT statistics from 2001 to 2014 there were 676 crashes within the 27 mile stretch. 249 people were injured and 9 people died. 3 more people have now died in Warren County in the past 18 months and 30 vehicle accidents occurred in that same time period. (Family of deceased please Stand)

This highway is so dangerous because of the wide variety of vehicles that use the Highway. We have school buses

filled with Children from at least 2 different school districts stopping on the highway to pick up children. We have passenger cars of course and since there are farm fields on both sides of the 27 mile stretch of highway, we have slow moving farm equipment and we have an ever-increasing number of semi-trucks traveling the same stretch of road.

The road is narrow with no shoulders per highway width standards. There is no place to pull over, so, there is no margin for error. There are a number of curves that are posted 10-20 miles per hour below highway speeds.

I am here to also make you aware of the economic development that is happening right now that will dramatically increase the amount of semi-truck traffic.

The Smithfield Foods \$100 million-dollar modernization and expansion that is taking place right now will increase their daily harvest of hogs. Currently some 12,500 live hogs are trucked in daily in livestock trailers. Truck volume will increase proportionately with this increase in production. Also, everyday almost 1,800 employees drive into work at the plant with those numbers set to increase as well.

Cloverleaf Cold Storage trucks in frozen food products and pork products into their cold storage facility from other Smithfield plants. They also must truck out finished pork products from the processing.

Hirshbach Trucking is making a multi-million-dollar investment in Monmouth to make Monmouth their main hub for their company increasing their fleet by 1,000 new semi tractors. They are adding a new campus that will include truck and trailer washouts, mechanic shops, driver lounges, CDL medical facility, and new driver training. The property has been purchased and design engineering for the campus is underway.

Last year, Hirschbach hauled over 20,000 loads of meat from the Smithfield/Cloverleaf Cold Storage facility. The anticipated Smithfield growth will create a linear increase in truck loads of meat for distribution.

Big River Grain has added additional grain storage at the Monmouth facility resulting in grain truck traffic to and from their facility at 11,500 trucks annually.

Midwest Pet Food has experienced a 22.4% growth in their business over the past 18 months and is planning additional expansion to their Monmouth facility. Their current truck traffic is approximately 70-80 loads per week which will correspondingly increase after the planned expansion.

Love's Truck Plaza has plans to build a facility on the southwest side of Monmouth along 11th Avenue and the 34/67 bypass is geared towards the trucking industry.

There is also a new truck service and repair facility being built right now because of all the development that is underway that will support investment in these facilities.

The total estimated number of trucks coming into Monmouth or leaving Monmouth annually from the five largest trucking interests only, generate approximately 122,000 truckloads a year.

These estimates do not include the amount of truck traffic that travels to and from Macomb, to Pella Iowa for finished production, as well as raw materials via Highway 34.

This project is long overdue and we ask that this be the year that we get the appropriate funding to expand Highway 34 from Monmouth to Burlington, Iowa.