

NORTHWEST HERALD

McHenry County, Illinois, news and video



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Bridge crossed off county's list, but many more remain

Workers last week put the finishing touches on the third rural county bridge to be replaced this year.

The McHenry County Division of Transportation opened the Dunham Road bridge over Rush Creek on Friday, which joined newly replaced bridges opened in the spring over Piscasaw Creek on Graf Road and the Blivin Street bridge in Spring Grove over Nippersink Creek.

Although there have been setbacks – the Blivin Street bridge was finished behind schedule and replacement of the nearby Hill Road bridge has been pushed to next year – the DOT's program to repair and replace deficient bridges has proceeded apace, design manager Wally Dittrich said.



Construction continues Thursday on a bridge off Winn Road north of Route 12 in Spring Grove. The Winn Road bridge is one of several currently being replaced across McHenry County. (Mike Greene – mgreene@shawmedia.com)

"We've been replacing two to four bridges a year, and that's going to continue for the foreseeable future," Dittrich said. "We have two definitely that will be replaced next year and another six in various stages of engineering."

The county plans to spend \$19.8 million over the next five years to replace six bridges and finish engineering for nine more, according to its most recent five-year highway improvement plan.

About 60 percent of the more than 200 bridges in McHenry County are under county jurisdiction, or shared jurisdiction with townships. The remainder are under municipal control – such as the Winn Road bridge replacement ongoing in Spring Grove – or the Illinois Department of Transportation.

While most of the county's projects have focused on smaller, rural bridges, that will change next year with a widening of the Charles Miller Road bridge in McHenry.

That project, likely to be bid out in September, will increase the bridge to four lanes by building a new span next to the existing one. Unlike most county bridge projects, this one is not replacing a deficient span – the existing bridge is only about 20 years old.

"We simply need more capacity on there," Dittrich said. "It has nothing to do with the condition of the bridge that's out there."

The widening is part of the first of two phases for improving Charles Miller Road. The first phase also includes adding lanes to River Road and Charles Miller Road west to Green Street. A second phase will add lanes and improve the road from Green Street west to Route 31.

The estimated cost for both phases is about \$25 million.

The county also plans in November to bid replacing the Lawrence Road bridge in rural Chemung Township and rebid the Hill Road bridge.

Work on the Hill Road bridge, which has been closed since January, was bid out and supposed to start this year, but procurement problems caused delays and forced IDOT to rebid the project.

A 2011 study released by a transportation advocacy group rated about 15 percent of the county's bridges as structurally deficient. A bridge is labeled deficient by Federal Highway Administration standards if any of its three key components – deck, superstructure and substructure – is rated at 4 or less on a 10-point scale.

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