

April 8, 2009

County to receive \$1.55 million in stimulus funds for improvements

By Andrea Uhde
auhde@courier-journal.com

For years, people in Oldham have been hoping for walkways and trails that would allow them to run, bike or walk across the county.

Thanks to some stimulus money expected from the federal government, that plan is closer to reality.

Oldham County is hoping to receive \$1.55million for projects ranging from sidewalks in Crestwood and other areas to a pedestrian bridge over Interstate 71 in Buckner, which will be part of the county's planned greenways trail.

But the county hasn't received any of the money yet.

Josh Suiter, a spokesman for the Kentuckiana Regional Planning & Development Agency, said some of Oldham's projects are still in the approval phase. Others have been approved, and the money is expected to funnel through KIPDA and into Oldham soon.

Approved funds

The funds that have been approved for Oldham are \$123,750 for sidewalks, most of them in Crestwood and some along Ky. 1793 and other areas, and \$110,000 for installing a total of one mile's worth of guardrails along various roads. Deputy Judge-Executive Paula Gish said those roads have not been determined.

Crestwood Mayor Dennis Deibel said he hadn't heard that stimulus funds had been allocated for sidewalks there, but he said the city plans to build a sidewalk from the Walgreens store on Ky. 22 to the CVS store at Ky. 146. Right now, the city is planning to use a grant for that project, but it would look into using that grant for something else if the stimulus money comes through, Deibel said.

Murner said Oldham also can plan on having \$222,000 in stimulus money for energy-saving projects. Oldham was one of a group of counties in Kentucky selected for the money, which the county as of April 1 was not sure how it would spend. One option could be to buy a new heating and air-conditioning system to save money in utility bills, Murner said.

Possible funds

Oldham officials also hope to get \$440,000 for improvements to Old Floydsburg Road, which runs from the Jefferson County line through Pewee Valley and up to Ky. 1408, and \$876,853 for a pedestrian bridge that would be built near Exit 17 of Interstate 71, near the Thorntons gas station in

Buckner. The county is still working on plans and applications for the money.

The bridge would be a key piece in the greenway trail that officials and residents have been working for years to build between La Grange and Pewee Valley, said Ashli Collins with Greenways for Oldham County.

"If they can get that in place, it makes all the other connections easier," she said.

Murner said it could also help the county get more grants for trails that would connect to the bridge. Currently trails are in place or close to being built from downtown La Grange to Commerce Parkway, and then down that road to Ky. 393.

Murner said Old Floydsburg Road is "a very ugly road and it's very difficult to do anything with" because there are cliffs on either side of the road.

"It's an extremely difficult road but highly traveled," he said.

He said a one-lane bridge there would be expanded. Gish said the county could request stimulus money only for projects that met certain requirements. In the first phase of requests, they could request money only for projects they could start on within 100 days. Later, they were able to request funds for projects that could start within a year, she said.

Suiter said that timeline is important because KIPDA wants governments to be able to use the money before there's any chance of it being taken away.

Murner said he also hopes the state will sign off on about \$32million in stimulus funds for Oldham road projects on the state's transportation plan. Those include reconstructing Ky. 393 north of I-71 and widening Ky. 22 to three lanes between Ky. 329 and the Ky. 329 bypass and to five lanes from the bypass to Abbott Lane.

Other agencies

For other agencies, funding for projects is still fuzzy.

The Oldham County Water District has requested up to \$14million to pay for its planned improvements, including a new pipeline and wells in Westport. District superintendent Phillip Ward said he's not optimistic they will get any money because it may not be at the top of the priority list.

Murner said the sewer district has also requested \$200,000 for storm-water related measures, \$1million to improve the Ky. 1793 pump station in the Goshen area and \$400,000 to take the Green Valley plant offline. He said the district is also asking for \$1.5million to close down the existing plant in Buckner and direct sewage to a plant at the Kentucky State Reformatory.

Rebecca DeSensi with Oldham County Public Schools said the school system doesn't have details yet on how much stimulus money it may get, and no plans will be presented until that happens.

Reporter Andrea Uhde can be reached at (502) 582-4663.
