

Dec. 15, 2011

11-125

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TIGER III funds awarded for rail improvements

The Kansas Department of Transportation has been awarded a \$6.56 million federal Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery III (TIGER III) grant to help with rail improvements between Solomon and Downs.

Major infrastructure enhancements will be made on 84 miles of rail line operated by the Kyle Railroad between the two north central Kansas towns. Officially known as the Solomon Rural Rail Infrastructure Project, work will include installation of 50,400 cross ties and improvements to 24 highway crossings.

“This project will generate significant economic development benefits for area farmers as they gain access to enhanced transportation options,” said KDOT Secretary of Transportation Deb Miller. “It will also help avoid rail abandonment and avert an increase in heavy rural truck traffic on our roadways.”

Poor cross tie quality has prevented the Kyle Railroad from handling modern 286,000-pound rail cars and trains must travel at 10 miles per hour. After the improvements are made, rail cars will be able to carry 23,000 more pounds and reach the modern standard. Trains will also be able to travel up to 25 miles per hour.

Total cost of the project is \$8.2 million with 80 percent federal funding. The state and the Kyle Railroad will provide a total of 20 percent funding toward the project.

The project is expected to be let for construction bids by KDOT in the spring of 2012 with work being completed by the summer.

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