

## Capital plan to bring projects, jobs to Southland

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BY [STEPHANIE GEHRING](#), Staff Writer

From the third airport to road construction projects and park improvements, the Southland is in store for a good share of the \$31 billion capital program Gov. Pat Quinn signed this week.

The Illinois Jobs Now plan is expected to boost the state's economy by creating and retaining an estimated 439,000 jobs in the next six years, according to Quinn.

This is the first capital bill signed into law in more than 10 years. The projects will be financed by new and higher taxes and gambling revenues.

State Rep. Al Riley (D-Olympia Fields) said the region has done well.

"Myself and other (Southland) legislators really worked hard to be sure we got our fair share," he said.

The program will fund road and bridge projects in Cook and Will counties that include \$99 million toward reconstruction and the addition of lanes for LaGrange Road from 131st to 179th streets; \$38 million for additional lanes and bridge replacement for U.S. 6 from the Will-Cook county line to U.S. 45; and \$131 million for additional lane and bridge reconstruction at U.S. 30 from east of Williams Street to U.S. 45 and from U.S. 45 to Illinois 43.

Two area hospitals - Little Company of Mary Hospital in Evergreen Park and Christ Medical Center in Oak Lawn - each have \$100,000 earmarked to help pay for improvements.

Local colleges including Moraine Valley Community College in Palos Hills (\$41,635) and Prairie State College in Chicago Heights (\$811,858) each will get funds for additions, and South Suburban College in South Holland (\$437,000) will receive funds for flood improvement.

U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-3rd) praised the state capital program because it includes \$322 million in funding for the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program, which is designed to reduce rail and road congestion in Chicago and the surrounding area.

A \$1.5 billion public-private partnership, CREATE will construct 31 rail overpasses and underpasses and include numerous other infrastructure projects that will benefit national and regional freight traffic, intercity rail passengers and local drivers, according to Lipinski.

"Blocked railroad crossings that result in long delays for motorists have been a fact of life for generations of area residents," Lipinski said in a news release. "But the money for CREATE that is included in the Illinois Jobs Now plan will go a long way toward alleviating this issue in our communities."

"Just about every community is receiving some improvements," State Sen. Ed Maloney (D-Chicago) said Tuesday.

Maloney said the bill will fund railroad crossing improvements, social service agencies and road improvements in his communities.

"These projects should generate jobs. This should put many back to work," he said.

State Sen. Maggie Crotty (D-Oak Forest) said some of the projects in her district are from the 2006 or 2007 budget that were never funded.

"Those communities put the money up, and I made sure those municipalities got their money back," Crotty said.

She estimates she brought back about \$1.2 million toward roads, public safety improvements and flooding relief.

In Oak Forest, \$200,000 has been earmarked for repair and maintenance to the Metra station access sidewalks, according to the plan.

On top of road projects and other capital improvements, Riley said he has allocated \$1.6 million for water and sewer infrastructure improvements.

"There are some communities over time that maybe overlooked their roads and sewers. Even though you can't see it, the ability to take care of your infrastructure is important. These are major projects," he said.

*Stephanie Gehring can be reached at [sgehring@southtownstar.com](mailto:sgehring@southtownstar.com) or (708) 633-5971.*