

# GRADD receives \$17.3M federal grant for bridge rehab

By Ken Silva Messenger-Inquirer

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Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) announced Monday that the Department of Transportation (DOT) will provide more than \$17.3 million to the Green River Area Development District to rehabilitate the Rockport Railroad Bridge, which spans the Green River between Kentucky's Ohio and Muhlenberg counties.

DOT awarded the grant as part of its Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) program. The Green River Area Development District will use the funds to rehabilitate the Rockport Railroad Bridge by replacing its deck, improving the approaches to the bridge, and upgrading the electrical and mechanical components that allow the bridge to rise and accommodate river traffic, according to a press release from McConnell's office.

"The Rockport Railroad Bridge has been a longstanding issue in our area, impacting Kentucky's entire freight transportation network," said Joanna Shake, the executive director of GRADD. "We are excited to see this bridge project move forward and bring future economic development to our region."

Shake told the Messenger-Inquirer that her office just received news about being the grant recipient on Friday, and that more details will be finalized at a "grant agreement meeting" later this month. She said the entire project is expected to take about five years from now until its completion.

She said GRADD partnered with Paducah & Louisville Railway, Inc., (P&L) which wasn't eligible to apply for the federal grant. Shake said her agency took on the project because it aligns with GRADD's mission of economic develop in the region.

According to grant application documents provided by Shake, the Rockport Bridge rehabilitation has an estimated cost of \$36 million. P&L pledged to match the funds necessary for the project's completion, and the railway will also be responsible for funding ongoing operations and maintenance there, the grant application documents said.

The grant application documents further explain that the bridge consists of 538 feet of steel, 18 feet of concrete and 1,209 feet of timber.

That structure is more than 100 years old and is P&L's main rail line in Ohio County, servicing more than 110,000 freight carloads annually, according to McConnell's press release.

"It forms a critical link in the supply chains that deliver military equipment to Fort Knox, coal to Louisville Gas & Electric, and raw materials to manufacturers all along the railroad's 260-mile span," the press release added.

McConnell said he supported GRADD's grant application by writing a letter to Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg in its favor.

"Today's grant announcement is a long time coming and will help our state overhaul one of the most critical bottlenecks in our entire rail system," McConnell said.