

Railroad Projects In A Holding Pattern

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — The state Railroad Board agreed Wednesday to reset the duration for a nearly \$2 million loan to be used repairing the Sioux Valley line in southeastern South Dakota.

The board originally approved the loan last year as well as an accompanying commitment of nearly \$2 million in state grant funding.

On Wednesday, the board turned down a request from Jack Parliament, the manager for the Dakota and Iowa Railroad, to use the grant funding before drawing on the loan.

The board decided instead the loan must be fully drawn before additional bills for work can be paid from the grant.

Parliament is a former member of the board.

He needs to repair a series of bridges on the Big Sioux River along the segment of the railroad between Canton and Elk Point that was flooded last spring.

The State of South Dakota owns the rail bed, which runs to and fro over the border between South Dakota and Iowa. The Dakota and Iowa Railroad holds the lease for the route.

The original loan agreement called for work to begin in 2014 and for the first repayment to be made Aug. 1, 2015.

Parliament said he probably wouldn't draw on the loan until possibly the end of December 2015.

The board voted to give the railroad company until Dec. 31, 2015, to

commence work that would require loan funding.

The loan payment schedule will be worked out between state Department of Transportation staff and Parliament.

Interest at 2 percent annually will be incurred starting on the date of the first draw of money from the loan.

Parliament said his plan calls for rebuilding various sets of bridges annually in 2015 through 2017.

None of the six board members liked the proposal from Parliament to use the grant money first.

"By the time this thing gets done, none of us might be on the board," commented Todd Yeaton of Kimball, the board's chairman.

"Jack," said another board member, Jerry Cope of Rapid City, "with all due respect, 2 percent is still pretty cheap money."

The board also learned Wednesday that money hasn't been drawn yet on the loan made last year of more than \$5 million for the Britton line upgrade.

State railroad administrator Bruce Lindholm said the site chosen for the proposed grain elevator has drainage issues. "We'll see how all that turns out," Lindholm said.

The Britton project was among several which Gov. Dennis Daugaard announced in mid-December as candidates for state financial assistance.

The improvements on the Britton route in northeastern South Dakota called for replacing 29 miles of light line.

The funding package included \$5.25

million to from the Dakota, Minnesota Valley and Western Railroad, \$5.25 million from a state loan and \$1 million from a governor's Future Fund grant.

Daugaard said a new terminal would be built at Britton as part of the plan.

The Sioux Valley repairs totaling \$7.3 million, including federal aid and company funding, were declared a priority that same day by the governor, as was reconstruction of the next segment of the Mitchell-Rapid City line west of Chamberlain into Lyman County.

Upgrading the 42 miles of state-owned line as far as Presho would cost an estimated \$29.9 million and would provide access to a new \$40 million grain terminal planned by Wheat Growers at Kennebec.

Lindholm said Wednesday the bids came in high for the work and a second round of bids is currently sought.

The sources are \$12.7 million of federal funding through what's known as a TIGER VI grant, \$7.2 million from the Legislature a year ago, \$7 million from the railroad trust fund through grants and loans, \$1 million of local support from the Rails to the Future consortium, \$1 million from operator Dakota Southern Railroad and \$1 million from a governor's Future Fund grant.

Lindholm said the bids came in \$11 million and \$13 million higher than the project engineer's opinion on prices for materials and installation totaling about \$24.3 million.

The second round of bids will be opened April 22 when the board holds its next meeting.

BIA Official Stabbed In Fort Thompson

FORT THOMPSON (AP) — The Bureau of Indian Affairs superintendent on the Crow Creek Indian Reservation has been stabbed.

Former tribal chairman Brandon Sazue says superintendent Patrick F. Duffy was attacked Wednesday at BIA headquarters in Fort Thompson.

The *Capital Journal* in Pierre reported that Duffy, who lives in Fort Pierre, was eventually taken to Sanford Hospital in Sioux Falls. His condition was unknown.

The *Journal* also reported a suspect was arrested and taken to a regional tribal jail.

Tribal police referred calls to BIA in Aberdeen, which referred calls to Washington, which didn't immediately return them. Current chairwoman Roxanne Sazue says she won't comment until she gathers all the details.

Brandon Sazue says that as superintendent, Duffy oversees BIA facilities in Fort Thompson and manages tribal land.

Omaha Man Was Bilked Of \$125K

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — An Omaha man says his former girlfriend bilked him out of \$125,000 — and now she won't return his phone calls.

The 59-year-old man filed a complaint with the Omaha Police Department earlier this month, about a year after he discovered discrepancies in checks that he wrote to his ex-girlfriend.

The man tells police that he wrote two checks, one for \$6,000 and another for \$6,500, as gifts to a Council Bluffs woman he met at a bar and sporadically dated. He says he later discovered that the check amounts had been changed to \$60,000 and \$65,000, but that the woman promised to pay him back.

According to the police report, the woman has since blocked her phone number and he doesn't know her address.

Sturgis, Harley Davidson To Partnering

STURGIS (AP) — The city of Sturgis and Harley-Davidson are breaking ground on a new downtown plaza named after the motorcycle company, the result of a private-public partnership that also renames a city street after the company.

Officials from the city and motorcycle company break ground on the new Harley-Davidson Rally Point on Wednesday.

The plaza will cover more than 11,000 square feet and is meant to serve as a hub for riders during the annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally and a gathering place for the public during the rest of the year.

Sturgis Mayor Mark Carstensen says the plaza solidifies Harley's presence in the city.

Harley plans to have the plaza complete by this year's rally, which is the 75th anniversary and is expected to attract more than 1 million people.

Nebraska

Term-Limit Expansion Measure Triggers Debate

BY GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Nebraska voters may once again get to decide whether lawmakers can serve an extra four years in office under a proposal making its way through the Legislature.

Lawmakers began debating a ballot measure Wednesday that would allow future senators to serve up to 12 consecutive years.

Term limits went into effect in 2006 under a voter-approved constitutional amendment that limited lawmakers to two consecutive four-year terms. The new measure would allow future lawmakers to serve up to either three consecutive four-year terms, or two back-to-back six-year terms.

Sen. Paul Schumacher of Columbus said he proposed the amendment because it takes time for lawmakers to build the experience needed to govern effectively. Schumacher said he supports term limits, but senators face a steep learning curve when they arrive at the Legislature.

"Like all good ideas, there is often a downside and tweaking that needs to be done to make them better," Schumacher said. "The idea of limiting the Legislature to two four-year terms has had some consequences. The longer that you're down here, the more obvious those consequences become."

The proposal wouldn't apply to any current senators and would be phased in through 2024, when all legislative candidates would be elected to six-year terms.

Voters may resist, though, after enacting term limits in 2000 and turning down three two-year terms in 2012. The 2012 proposal was the fourth time term limits have appeared on the ballot, but past efforts were struck down in court.

Advocates for term limits said they prevent lawmakers from becoming career politicians and guarantee a steady supply of fresh faces and new ideas.

Sen. Robert Hilkemann of Omaha said lawmakers should respect the will of voters.

"The people of Nebraska have spoken twice on this, and they said two four-year terms," he said. "Do we not get it? It's all right to discuss this, but I think our present system is just fine."

But Sen. Mike Gloor of Grand Island said term limits prevent senators from falling into a "rut" of thinking about issues, but lawmakers often need a few years to learn

what they need to know.

Sen. Bill Kintner of Papillion said serving three four-year terms is better than two six-year stints because it forces senators to stand for election more often and keeps them connected with constituents. "When you have to go knock on doors,

when you have to talk with people, you find out what's on their mind," he said.

Some supporters backed term limits as a way to oust former Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers. Chambers, who served nearly 40 years, is well-known for his intimate knowledge of legislative

rules and his ability to single-handedly block bills.

Term limits forced him from office in January 2009, but he was re-elected in 2013 after sitting out the minimum time required.

The measure is LR7CA.

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