

Iowa DOT awards another \$1.38 million for Johnston road to Pioneer Hi-Bred expansion

10:26 AM, Mar 8, 2011 | by William Petroski |

The Iowa Transportation Commission today awarded an additional \$1.38 million in state money to the City of Johnston to upgrade a road leading to new and expanded research facilities operated by Pioneer Hi-Bred International.

The commission, which is the policy arm of the Iowa Department of Transportation, last June gave Johnston officials \$4.95 million in state assistance for the road project. But the city is eligible for additional state money because Pioneer has made a commitment to hire an additional 138 people for “very high quality jobs,” said Craig Markley, a DOT grants administrator in Ames.

Overall, the seed company has promised to create a total of 633 new jobs along with a capital investment of \$316 million, state officials said. The jobs will pay an average of \$25.90 per hour. The DOT’s grants for the road project will now total \$6.33 million, or \$10,000 per job.

Pioneer has been expanding its Iowa operations to bolster its competition with biotech rivals Monsanto, Syngenta and Dow Agrosciences for new generations of genetically engineered corn and soybean seeds.

In a separate action, the Iowa Economic Development Board in January awarded Pioneer \$7 million in state income tax credits for its planned \$32 million expansion of its Johnston research facilities.

The total cost of the Johnston road project is \$8.1 million with city officials picking up a local match to the state’s grants. The project will involve widening 7,755 feet of Northwest 62nd Avenue from two lanes to four lanes and providing center turning lanes. The project area will extend from 86th Street east to Pioneer Parkway, just past the Pioneer Hi-Bred headquarters in Johnston.



Johnston given state money for road to Pioneer

11:26 PM, Mar. 8, 2011 |



Written by
WILLIAM PETROSKI

The Iowa Transportation Commission awarded an additional \$1.4 million in state money on Tuesday to the city of Johnston to widen a road leading to new research facilities planned by Pioneer Hi-Bred.

The commission, which is the policy arm of the Iowa Department of Transportation, in June gave Johnston \$4.9 million in state assistance for the road. But the city is eligible for additional state money because Pioneer has committed to hiring an additional 138 people for "very high quality jobs," said Craig Markley, a DOT grants administrator in Ames.

Earlier, the company won an estimated \$7 million in state income tax credits from the Iowa Economic Development Board for its planned \$32 million expansion of its greenhouse research labs at its headquarters in Johnston.

Overall, the seed company has promised to create 633 jobs while making a capital investment of \$316 million, state officials said. The jobs will pay an average of \$25.90 per hour. The DOT grants for the road project will total \$6.3 million, or \$10,000 per job.

Pioneer has been expanding its Iowa operations to bolster its competition with biotech rivals Monsanto, Syngenta and Dow Agrosciences for new generations of genetically engineered corn and soybean seeds.

The cost of the Johnston road project is \$8.1 million, with city officials picking up a local match to the state's grants. The project will involve widening 7,755 feet of Northwest 62nd Avenue from two to four lanes and providing center turning lanes.

The project area will extend from 86th Street east to Pioneer Parkway, just past the Pioneer headquarters in Johnston.

Johnston may add roundabouts to N.W. 62nd Avenue

10:52 PM, Mar. 9, 2011



Written by
TODD ERZEN

The road is being expanded to four lanes as Pioneer plans to add 633 positions.

Street improvements set to begin this spring on Northwest 62nd Avenue in Johnston will benefit from an additional \$1.38 million in state money and may include the addition of multiple roundabouts.

The extra cash will contribute to a total road project cost of \$8.1 million, with city officials picking up a local match. The Iowa Department of Transportation last June gave Johnston officials \$4.95 million in state road assistance money, but Johnston became eligible for additional state money because Pioneer Hi-Bred made a commitment to hire an additional 138 people.

Pioneer has now promised to create 633 jobs along with a capital investment of \$316 million, state officials said.

As for the roundabouts, Johnston Public Works Director Dave Cubit said he has "been doing educational meetings with Pioneer" as the city prepares to widen Northwest 62nd Avenue from two lanes to four lanes from Northwest 86th Street east to Pioneer Parkway.

As many as three or four roundabouts, which are continuous-flow traffic circles used at intersections instead of traffic signals, could be used along that stretch and beyond toward the vicinity of Johnston High School, Johnston Middle School and Wallace Elementary School.

Cubit hopes to bring specific recommendations on the matter to the City Council by the end of March.

Pioneer officials are keeping an open mind.

"We appreciate the opportunity to learn more about the different options available and are interested to make sure there is infrastructure to support the growth we are bringing to the community," said Pioneer spokesperson Bridget Anderson.

Roundabouts have long been popular in Europe and have caught on in the United States during the past decade. They function by moving vehicles through intersections in a counter-clockwise direction with the help of yield signs and traffic speeds of 15 to 25 miles per hour in areas of relatively high traffic density.

Proponents say roundabouts reduce the number of crashes and traffic fatalities, move traffic more efficiently than traditional four-way traffic lights, save money on buying and operating traffic signal equipment and lessen the impact of vehicle traffic on the environment by reduced idling time.

Register reporter William Petroski contributed to this story.