

STATE ASKS 1ST BIDS FOR PAVING IN CONGRESS ST.

Expect Section Will Be Open by Fall of 1955

BY HAL FOUST

The Illinois highway department is advertising for bids for its first expressway pavement construction in Chicago. It's for two contiguous jobs in Congress st., from Sacramento av. to Western av. and from Western to Damen av., for a total of 1.25 miles.

These bids will be opened on Aug. 2. In September, bids will be received by the state for another one-half mile of Congress st. paving, from Damen to Ashland av.

Grading and drainage work will get under way this year on these sectors, said Roger Nusbaum, state expressway engineer. The pavement, three lanes in each direction, will be laid next year.

Hope for 1957 Finish Date

"There should be a usable section of Congress st. opened to traffic in the fall of 1955," Nusbaum said. "We'll be awarding contracts for paving east from Ashland av. next year. We still hope Congress st. will be finished from the Loop to the Du Page county line by the end of 1957; altho there is some doubt whether this can be realized."

The state has been assigning 13 million dollars a year to Cook county expressways, sharing costs with the city and the county for work within Chicago and splitting costs 50-50 with the county in work outside Chicago. P a v e m e n t alone is costing almost 2 million dollars a mile.

Progress has lagged. Under the present financial setup, a northwest route from the Loop to O'Hare International airport and Edens expressway could not be finished before 1961.

Gov. Stratton has taken a step toward revising the financial setup for expressway construction in the metropolitan area. He has assigned Ralph R. Bartelsmeyer, chief of the Illinois highway department, to report on how other large cities have been building urban expressway systems while Chicago has dallied. William J. Mortimer, chief of the Cook county highway department, also is participating in this study.

See Section Open in Late '55

The county will open bids by October on 2.75 miles of Congress st. paving west from Sacramento to Laramie av. James F. Kelly, assistant superintendent of the county highway department, said this should be open to traffic by the winter of 1955-56.

By that time, the city hopes to complete the east end of the Congress expressway, including the new bridge over the south branch of the Chicago river. The extension southward of double decked Wacker dr. to Congress is scheduled for completion at this same time.

A gap of 3.5 miles from Laramie to 1st av., Maywood, may be long in closing. It involves right of way negotiations with the Chicago Aurora and Elgin, the Baltimore and Ohio Chicago Terminal railroad, and the Chicago transit authority. It also calls for moving 750 graves from cemetery property to be condemned for right of way.

Still Seek Right of Way

West of 1st av., the county has laid pavement to 19th av. but will not open this short section to traffic until it is finished to Mannheim rd. This extension is under construction.

West of Congress, progress has been stalled by negotiations for right of way with a stone quarry owned by Consumers company.