

# **iMAN, wayfinding projects set Steuben apart**

**Posted: Thursday, November 18, 2010 12:00 am**

We have been impressed with many of the varied presentations to Steuben County officials for the use of Major Moves Transportation Fund monies.

The requests have been all over the map, from help with important road projects to those that could be considered emergencies, like the funding of the environmental cleanup at Univertical Corp. in Angola.

There have been numbers of requests, some of which have been funded and others that have not. As Steuben County Commissioners and Steuben County Council members have said, the requests will all have to be judged on their merit.

Major Moves money, as many of you readers are probably aware, can only be used for specific purposes. Those are infrastructure, transportation and economic development.

This year we have seen the funding of the innovative Indiana Metropolitan Area Network, the plan to run fiber optics throughout the community. This is a \$2 million infrastructure project that could well be seen as an economic development project. Running fiber in all of the county makes it possible for government, business and maybe someday residents to have broadband access now only available in metropolitan areas (we find it humorous that iMAN's name includes metropolitan when we are far from it).

Funding iMAN definitely fit the mold for the use of Major Moves money.

Next up comes the request from a local consortium to fund a study to design a wayfinding system for the entire county. This project will create a Steuben County-themed design for signage that will not only welcome people to the community, but will guide them and residents to resources all across the county.

This request, for \$50,000, might not necessarily fit into the transportation or infrastructure categories, but definitely fits economic development. In fact it fits in with the newly adopted county strategic plan that was commissioned by the Steuben County Economic Development Corp.

We have endorsed a variety of Major Moves requests over the years for a variety of reasons. The request for wayfinding, like iMAN,

are investments in the future of Steuben County.

Some might find such things as wayfinding as unnecessary frills. We think having a uniform sign system will set our community apart as being forward-thinking. It will show that we care about our community and those who visit it. It creates a friendlier, more welcoming environment.

Here's how the proposal for the system put it:

“The ability to identify one's location and arrive at the desired destination in an unknown environment results in people who are oriented, calmer, happier and prone to spend more money and time in an area. Effective wayfinding also reminds residents of the area's attractions and businesses, along with increasing pride in our community.”

Whether the project gets funded entirely by Major Moves or with some money from the innkeeper's tax, we don't care. That's for the politicians to work out.

Thanks to Major Moves, we have the ability to be able to spend money on projects such as iMAN or in this case, wayfinding, that other counties do not. These are projects that will set us apart from other rural counties in Indiana, much like many of our other positive attributes currently do.