

# The Allegan County News



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*The Commercial Record*



The Plainwell & Otsego

**Union Enterprise**

## M-89 work in Plainwell would alter intersection

**By Tim Keith  
Staff Writer**

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The Michigan Department of Transportation outlined its plans for rebuilding M-89 in Plainwell, as well as the detour routes it plans to use during the project, at an open-house meeting Thursday, Jan. 13.

The construction, scheduled to take place in 2012 and 2013, will include tearing out the road's current cement base and replacing it with an asphalt base, replacing the M-89 bridge over the mill race, eliminating the "merging lane" on eastbound M-89 near Harding's Friendly Market the removal of the concrete barrier separating traffic lanes on the M-89 bridge over US-131, the addition of sidewalks over US-131 and ending West Bridge Street before its intersection with M-89 and Main Street in downtown Plainwell.



**A concept drawing, provided by MDOT, for the intersection of M-89 and Main Street in Plainwell demonstrates a possible design for the closure of the intersection's "fifth leg," West Bridge Street. (Graphic provided)**

Plainwell will also replace old water and sewer lines that run underneath the road.

MDOT plans to close the fifth leg of Plainwell's downtown intersection by ending West Bridge Street prior to the intersection.

The plan is only possible if the city's fire station is moved—it is currently located on Bridge Street near the intersection—and the Michigan Historical Commission approves plans to change the intersection, said MDOT cost and scheduling engineer Jon Sytsma. It also depends on approval of a Transportation Enhancement Grant for funding.

The fire department will be moved to a new building on the Plainwell Paper mill site.

The historical commission has required that the view of Bridge Street not be obstructed by any plans to close it, said Douglas Straus, senior project engineer for Benesch, the consulting firm that created the designs for the M-89 project.

The project will require partial closing of the road, Straus said. Eastbound traffic will be maintained through the

construction zone throughout the project, westbound traffic will be redirected around Plainwell.

As many as 12,000 cars travel the road daily in downtown Plainwell, he said.

The detour route will travel north from M-89 along 6th Street, and then westbound on 106th Avenue to Farmer Street in Otsego, Straus said.

Traffic flow was one of MDOT's first concerns Sytsma said.

"One of the first things we started thinking about when we knew we were going to do this was traffic," he said.

MDOT decided to maintain eastbound traffic in order to allow access to the city from US-131, he said.

"If you let people get in easy, then they always find their way back out," he said.

The partial closing of M-89 has business owners concerned, Downtown Development Authority board president EJ Hart said.

"It's got to happen, but I'm very nervous," said Hart.

Hart, owner of Hart's Jewelers in downtown Plainwell, said that decreased traffic caused by the detours made business owners worry, but the end result will probably be very good for the city.

"It'll be one of those things that we have a lot of apprehension about, and that will probably be worse than the pain (of the detour)," he said. "It looks like it's going to be fantastic when it's done.

"Overall I'm very hopeful but I'm nervous as a son of a gun."

Sue Fleser, a retired Gilkey Elementary School aide, said that keeping people aware of the project will be one of the most important things MDOT needs to do.

"Everybody in this town needs to be 'in the know' about this," Fleser said. "Everybody in town is going to be affected by it."

Construction will also close the portions of the M-89/US- 131 interchange at various times, he said. Northbound traffic will be rerouted to 106th Avenue; southbound traffic will be rerouted to D Avenue.

Eliminating the merging lane near the intersection of M-89 and Prince Street will create room for a sidewalk and eliminate a potential hazard, Straus said.

The lane located in front of a Wesco gas station and Harding's is currently used as a turn and traffic lane, causing confusion and occasionally accidents at the stores' driveway entrances, he said.

"It's a pretty dangerous scenario; we try to get rid of these," he said.

The new section of sidewalk will be part of an extension of sidewalks in the area that will cross the bridge over US-131.

The walkways will be a welcome addition, Fleser said.

"I see people walking on that and biking on that bridge all the time," she said. "It's probably a good idea to do that; it's not safe there."

The project will be undertaken in two phases with construction on the section from 12th Street to Hicks Street taking place between the spring and fall of 2012 and the section between Sherwood and Maple streets taking place the following year, Sytsma said.

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