



Plainwell meeting will discuss M-89 project

By Tim Keith
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Wednesday, January 5, 2011 1:28 PM EST

The Michigan Department of Transportation will answer questions at an open house about an upcoming project to rebuild M-89 through Plainwell.

The meeting will be at Plainwell city hall on Thursday, Jan. 13, from 6 to 8 p.m.

The project will include adding pedestrian access to the M-89 bridge over US-131, replacing the bridge over the mill race near Hicks Park and redefining traffic lanes to clarify their purpose, MDOT spokesperson Nick Schirripa said.

It will be split into two phases and take two years according to current plans, Plainwell superintendent of public works Rick Updike said.

The first phase will cover from 12th Street to the Kalamazoo River; the second will cover from Sherwood to Maple.

The plan calls for reducing the size of the cement island that separates traffic over US-131 to make room for pedestrian walkways over the bridge, Updike said.

City utilities will also be replaced underneath the road, he said. The sanitary sewers and water lines that run under M-89 are some of the oldest in town.

The MDOT work gave the city a perfect opportunity to replace them, he said.

"This type of project by MDOT only happens about once every 30 or 40 years," he said.

Many of the lines underneath M-89 are shallow and will already be exposed and potentially harmed by the roadwork, city manager Eric Wilson said.

Changes

The replacement will also change the nature of M-89 through Plainwell, Updike said.

The road currently has a cement base with a 2-inch layer of asphalt on top, he said. An 8-inch layer of asphalt will replace this.

The change will make maintenance easier, he said. Crews will be able to treat the top portion of the asphalt as a wear layer when repairing it, rather than having to replace the entire asphalt layer.

New layers of asphalt will also adhere to a base layer of asphalt better than they do to cement.

The asphalt base will also not have the cracks that the segmented cement base does, Updike said.

Work on the project is scheduled to begin in 2012, however the uncertain nature of the state's budget may

delay it, he said.

MDOT has delayed the work in the past, he said. In 2008 M-89 was resurfaced after MDOT realized that it couldn't complete the reconstruction project at that time.

The meeting will offer a chance for the public and MDOT to exchange ideas about the project, Schirripa said.

"That's why we're having the public meeting," he said. "We want to give the people an idea of what we're doing and get some of their ideas."

The meeting will help the department clarify details of the project, which will in turn enable it to start bidding the project out, he said.

"Once we get through the meeting, we will have a better handle on what it will cost," Schirripa said.

Most of the cost of the project will be split between the federal and state governments, he said.

Plainwell will pay for a portion of both the water and sanitary sewer components of the project, Updike said.

The project is expected to cost around \$7.5 million, he said.

The stretch of road in Plainwell has been on the state's radar for a while, he said.

"This is something we've known we have to get to sooner rather than later," he said. "It's just time. Every bit of road needs to be repaved or resealed at some point."

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