



M-89 reconstruction through Plainwell includes closing of Bridge Street at Main Street

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By **Sharon Sturdevant** | Special to the Kalamazoo Gazette

PLAINWELL — Proposed plans by the Michigan Department of Transportation to improve a two-mile stretch of M-89 include building pedestrian walkways into the U.S. 131 bridge as it is rehabilitated and replacing a bridge over a mill race in Plainwell.

The two-year project is finally slated to start in 2012.

"We've been working to plan this project for years," MDOT spokesman Nick Schirripa said.

"Funding has always been our biggest hurdle and we are confident enough that the funding is there to start this next process."

That next step includes a public hearing from 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday in Plainwell City Hall.

At that meeting, MDOT officials will display preliminary engineering plans for the project that also is to include reconstructing M-89 from 12th Street east to Florence Street and closing one spoke on a three-street downtown intersection through which some 5,200 vehicles travel daily.

"Our plans are to close Bridge Street at the downtown intersection and create more green space," Schirripa said. "There will no longer be a five-way intersection there but there won't be any other alignments."

Those who attend the public hearing can provide feedback that may be incorporated into the engineering plans before bids are sought later this summer or early this fall, Schirripa said.



Jerry Campbell | Special to the Gazette

During reconstruction of M-89 through Plainwell in 2012 and 2013, the Michigan Department of Transportation plans to permanently close Bridge Street where it intersects with M-89 and Main Street. This picture looks west from M-89 toward Bridge Street at the intersection with Main Street.

The project is scheduled to begin at the start of the 2012 construction season and end roughly a year later, Schirripa said.

MDOT expects that during the project eastbound M-89 traffic will be maintained through the stretch but westbound traffic will be detoured on a route along Sixth Street, 106th Avenue and into downtown Otsego.

IF YOU GO **M-89 meeting**

What: Michigan Department of Transportation will host a public hearing to discuss planned improvements to M-89 in Plainwell

When: 6-8 p.m. Thursday

Where: Plainwell City Hall, 141 N. Main St.

The project is expected to cost about \$11 million and be funded with federal dollars. But final costs won't be known until construction contracts are awarded late this year, Schirripa said.

The city, however, will help pay the cost for moving sewer and water lines from beneath M-89 into an easement area, city manager Erik Wilson said.

"The city has been planning and setting funds aside for the work for quite some time," Wilson said. "But we hope to know ASAP if the project has a green light because it is a big project that will cause a lot of disruption."

City leaders plan to be "proactive" in helping businesses make sure the downtown will remain open throughout the M-89 construction project, Wilson said.

The city also is seeking grant money to help expand Hicks Park and create a "downtown plaza feel" when the fifth-leg of the downtown intersection is closed, Wilson said.

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