



Road projects to bring detours this summer

Easton to do utility work on Cattell Street, wall repairs on Canal before resurfacing.

Friday, March 04, 2005

By **EDWARD SIEGER**
The Express-Times

EASTON -- City motorists can expect a summer of detours as two long-awaited road reconstruction projects begin.

City Engineer Joe Mauro and Public Services Director David Hopkins on Thursday outlined a timetable for the reconstruction of Canal Street and announced state transportation officials have agreed to resurface busy Cattell Street in coming months.

The Cattell Street improvements have been on PennDOT's to-do list for several years. Mayor Phil Mitman said state officials notified the city within the past few weeks that work would begin after July 1 and that the project should be finished by November.

PennDOT will probably close two or three blocks at a time to complete the work.

But before PennDOT resurfaces Cattell Street from North Third Street to the Forks Township border, city crews will undertake as many as 40 repair projects on sewer, water and storm pipes.

"We're going to do a significant amount of work on Cattell Street before the project even starts," Hopkins said.

The city will replace manhole covers, fire hydrants, water main valves and inspect sewer lines. The city has already applied for the necessary state permits to complete the utility projects, and work should begin within weeks, Mauro said.

Utility work will probably be done block-by-block and will require detours, Mauro said. For instance, the city may decide to close the northbound lane and direct traffic around the block, leaving the southbound lane open, he said.

Improvements to Cattell Street, however, will do nothing to control the estimated 16,000 vehicles that pass through College Hill daily.

Hopkins and Mitman said the city is soliciting ideas from various city departments, community groups and Forks Township officials on how best to divert traffic off Cattell Street.

Mitman estimated as much as 80 percent of the street's daily traffic is bound for Route 22.

PennDOT officials are also willing to work with the city to address safety along Cattell Street, Hopkins said. This may entail a traffic light at High Street or other "traffic calming devices" highlighted in a Lafayette College Technology Clinic study presented last year, he said.

Megan McBride, president of the College Hill Neighborhood Association, complained to Forks

Township supervisors last month about the rise in traffic volume. The neighborhood group is increasingly concerned about traffic brought to College Hill by housing developments in the township, she said.

"Your choices have become our problems," she told township supervisors.

McBride had noted other problems caused by development include overcrowding in the schools and flooding on West Lafayette Street that has damaged the foundations of homes.

Township officials told McBride they've met several times with Easton officials to discuss development problems, and that the township is working to develop more east-west routes to siphon traffic off Cattell Street.

The other significant streets project comes on the opposite side of town.

Originally planned about eight years ago, Canal Street will be milled and resurfaced from just west of Iron Street east to the railroad trestle. The city will contribute \$175,000 toward the project with the remainder of the estimated \$650,000 cost funded by the state as a project recommended by the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study.

Hopkins said utility lines under Canal Street are in good shape and will not be replaced. But a retaining wall that runs along the street and the railroad tracks must be replaced before work begins, Mauro said.

The shoulder of the road has crumbled in some areas and will continue to do so unless the wall that supports the road is rebuilt, Mauro said.

Canal Street will be closed except to local traffic, and motorists will be detoured onto Berwick Street from Glendon Avenue or to Berwick from Smith Avenue. City officials expect work to begin in July.

The sinkhole that's closed St. John Street and detoured traffic through South Side since December complicates the Canal Street project, and Hopkins said he hopes St. John Street will be open by the time work begins.

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation has given the city designs and \$300,000 to rebuild St. John Street. The street's northbound lane was not as severely damaged as the southbound lane and could be opened within the next 30 to 40 days, Hopkins said. The city plans to rebuild the southbound lane by early July before closing Canal Street, he said.

(Reporter Edward Sieger can be reached at 610-258-7171 or by e-mail at esieger@express-times.com.)

Copyright 2005 PennLive.com. All Rights Reserved.