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Expanding Talcott Street

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By SAMANTHA
MCDONNELL

OBSERVER Staff Writer

Article Photos



OBSERVER Photo by Samantha McDonnell

More than two decades in the making, Millennium Parkway may finally be moving forward. The project may be going out to bid early next year.

John Bremmer from the Chautauqua County Department of Public Facilities met with Common Council members in Dunkirk Friday morning to answer questions. Bremmer explained the major objectives of the project.

"One is to provide a more direct truck route from the Thruway interchange up to the business (and) commercial area along Progress Drive and Middle Road," Bremmer said. "The existing truck route goes up Route 60 to Route 5 ... to Middle Road to Progress Drive. Once you get past School 3 (on Route 60), there are quite a few residences there that truck (route) goes by."

Bremmer explained Middle Road is not wide enough for the current truck traffic. Taking truck traffic away from the CSX railroad crossing on Middle Road and opening up the former Roblin Steel site, a current brownfield, to development and truck traffic are also objectives for the project.

The project has had three public meetings since 2009 with three alternatives initially proposed. The first option was to improve the existing route but that was thrown out. The second alternative route was to improve other existing roads. The route led trucks off of Route 60 onto Williams Street and by using New, Urban and Middle roads to get to Werle Road. Williams Street would have had to be wider causing graves in St. Mary's Cemetery to be moved.

The third alternative route was constructing a new route across farmland in the town of Sheridan. Due to environmental studies finding wetlands, residents not wanting to give up their lands and

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expenses, this alternative was also thrown out. It was during an opportunity for residents to voice their opinions and suggestions, routes using Courtney and Talcott streets were brought up.

"We looked at some of those alternatives and they looked pretty promising," Bremmer said.

The reason Talcott Street looked promising was due to the amount of development already on the street with Cott Beverages and Carriage House. The east end of Talcott also is adjacent to the brownfield which has hopes of future developments. The project will be funded by 80 percent federal monies, 15 percent state monies and five percent county funding. City Attorney Ron Szot had some questions regarding the project.

"I think it's interesting you went over three alternatives and you talked about how the local people on those routes had opposition and the people on the third route had opposition ... did you ask any of the Talcott Street (residents)?" Szot said. "I presume that Talcott Street residents will say 'Go to Williams Street. Go to Sheridan. Go to the vineyards.' I thought it was interesting that you defaulted to screwing the city of Dunkirk."

Bremmer said after the Talcott Street realignment was proposed, a public meeting was held in January 2009. According to Bremmer, the county Department of Public Facilities, the county IDA and the county executive made a joint decision to choose the Talcott realignment for its purpose to best suit the needs of the project. Talcott Street is the shortest route and will direct traffic to future developments along the brownfield, Bremmer said.

The project will call for Talcott Street to be widened by 10 feet. Two lanes will be 12 feet each with an eight foot shoulder. The current middle line dividing the two lanes will not be moved.

The project will have to acquire 15 parcels all within the city, including a parcel owned by the city. Some of the parcels are on the east side of Roberts Road. Two of the major parcels that need to be acquired are the properties on the corner of Route 60 and Talcott Street. The northern corner is a residential apartment house and the southern corner is a business, Speedy's Seat Cover.

Both properties will be given offers and will have 90 days to relocate. Bremmer was unaware of what will happen if the property owners turn down the offer. One of the properties had already been given an offer and accepted while the other was yet to be presented. Bremmer was not sure which property had accepted.

Fourth Ward Councilwoman Stacy Szukala questioned about the safety for residents, especially school children walking to School 3 and inquired about a traffic light being put in at the intersection of Talcott Avenue and Maple Avenue.

"Both the consultant and the county public facilities requested a light ... and be accepted by the state DOT," Bremmer said. "The consultant did a lot of traffic studies ... those studies showed that a traffic light will be needed at Talcott Street and Route 60."

According to the state DOT, the light will only be put in once it is needed. The state's reasoning was that the proposed development may not happen.

"I'm really concerned about the children," Szukala said. "I need to be adamant that we pursue the traffic signal."

Szukala also brought up the issue about repairs in the future to the road. Bremmer said the county's policy is that all the curbs and drainage will be the responsibility of the city. The initial project will be covered with no city funding needed. Repairs in the future will be paid for by the city. As part of the project, a water line from Route 60 to Franklin Avenue is going to be replaced.

Director of Development Steve Neratko had a question concern that the island where Millennium Parkway will turn off of Roberts Road, north of the Norfolk Southern railroad tracks. The parkway will stem from Roberts Road after trucks turn right on Roberts Road coming from Talcott Street. An asphalt traffic island will be 275 by 40 feet in dimension separating lanes of traffic.

"That's a very large section of asphalt for seven or eight homes in the neighborhood there," Neratko said.

DPW Engineer Dave Manzella said the city would have to maintain that property and landscaping would require more man hours and funding.

The project, according to Bremmer, will go out to bid on Jan. 9 with construction hopefully starting in early spring. The Common Council has yet to approve the sale of the city parcel along Talcott Street for the project.

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