

## **Peshtigo Times – Wednesday, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

Wausaukee, DOT Share Ideas For Hwy. 141 Plans

Improvements to Hwy. 141 from Beaver to the Wisconsin/Michigan state line at Niagara on the agenda for Wisconsin Department of Transportation from now through 2015 include a complete reconstruct through the Village of Wausaukee in 2015. That project includes a new bridge at the north village limits.

The DOT timetable calls for reconstruction Hwy. 8 from Hwy. 141 to the Michigan border in 2010, complete reconstruction of Hwy. 141 in the City of Niagara, including replacing the bridge into Michigan, in 2010 and 2011; reconstruction from Amberg to County Z in Beecher in 2012, from south of PP in Beaver to Crivitz south village limits in 2013; from County X in Middle Inlet to the Wausaukee village limits in 2014, and for 2015 , the reconstruction through Wausaukee plus reconstruction through Crivitz to County X in Middle Inlet and from the Hwy. 8 intersection to the Niagara south city limits.

In preparation for work on their portion of the Hwy. 141 improvements, Wausaukee Village Board met Wednesday night, March 3, with representatives of the DOT, Wisconsin Public Service, and Coleman Engineering, the firm handling project design.

The entire village board was present. WPS was represented by Jon Joanis, Todd Mulvey and Ryan Erikkila represented Coleman Engineering, and the DOT was represented by Paul Zoellner, Scott Simmons and Steve Noel.

They discussed timetables, possible detour routes, impact on businesses while Main Street is shut down, cost sharing, improvements the village board may want to make while the road is torn up, incentives for beautification projects, and more.

Construction will be ongoing during the entire 2015 season. Regardless what decision is made about traffic through downtown, construction on the bridge must be done one half at a time, since there is no feasible detour. Either new crossing signals or a flag man will be needed at railroad crossings on whatever detour route is finally chosen.

Trustee Randy Schmidt recalled at a prior meeting they had been told before the detour started the state would come in and pave the detour route, sign it, etc., and afterward they would re-sign and repaint it, but not pave again unless it was badly torn up.

Pavement through Wausaukee will be asphalt unless the village wants to pay extra to have a concrete surface. Consensus of the board seemed to be they would prefer asphalt in any case.

There are to be sidewalks on both sides of the highway from one end of the village to the other. The DOT will pay for replacing existing sidewalks and 80 percent of the cost of putting new walks where there are none now. The board will pay \$17,000 toward the cost of putting sidewalks on both sides of the highway, uninterrupted, basically from one end of the village to the other, from the Exxon station to Division Street. There also will be sidewalks on both sides of the bridge. The existing sidewalks were last rebuilt in 1987.

Board members repeatedly said they want a nice looking, uncluttered downtown. Noel assured the board, "We'll lean to your side as much as we can."

Tentative plans call for rebuilding the highway one side at a time, with traffic on the other side, but there was considerable discussion on the possibilities of shortening the construction time and detouring traffic around the downtown. One proposed detour route is having one way traffic on First Ave. to Tyler Street to Division, with no turns on or off permitted. In any case, parking on the highway will be eliminated, but the village has been preparing for that by creating some off-street parking lots, for which the state will provide some improvements.

Trustee Hilbert (Slug) Radtke had suggested a detour route he and other board members felt would be ideal, but said he had been "shot down" by DOT officials. They indicated they will continue efforts to convince DOT people that would be a good solution, as there would be access through the back to all Main Street businesses, and by following his suggestion traffic could be kept entirely out of the construction area except on the bridge itself. Radtke said the state would get a cheaper bid because contractors can work faster when they do not need to contend with vehicles.

The village will also need to decide how to handle the 2015 Fourth of July parade and other celebrations, as well as traffic for the 2015 Marinette County Fair. They felt since most of the Fair traffic comes from Marinette or other points south, traffic can be rerouted to the fairgrounds via Hwy. 180 and back streets with few problems.

Main concerns of the board involved eliminating some of the telephone and power poles that clutter the downtown and having evenly spaced street lights. The DOT apparently will pay to design standard lighting.

The board favored putting electric cables underground, but was told that will be very costly, at \$1 million per mile, plus \$1,000 to \$2,000 per home and probably \$5,000 per business to have the connection then brought up and into the buildings. When this is done, each building would also need to have its wiring brought up to code, which is another major expense. The board was told they can, by zoning, require WPS customers to have underground service, but WPS cannot. WPS would then also need to negotiate easements for above-ground transformers. There are also telephone wires, fiber optic

cables and more. Jon Joanis of WPS said above ground service is much easier for them to repair quickly if there is a power outage. "It's not that we can't do it, it's just that there's a lot that goes into it," Joanis said. It will take a year to design an underground project.

Since the DOT needs to have all village plans in hand by April of 2012, Trustee John Ranallo concluded that means the village would need to have its decision made by next April.

Radtke commented that after looking at the costs of going underground, "those poles are looking better and better." He commented it would take a lot of sales to offset the million dollars per mile cost.

Trustee Rosie Figas asked what it would cost to redesign the poles so they are at least evenly spaced. Joanis and Trustee Randy Schmidt will take a look at that. Figas also suggested perhaps they could tie the street lights to the power poles to eliminate some of the clutter, and was told that could work provided they go with "cobra" lights rather than "acorn".

The board asked for price estimates on the cost to design a more attractive placement of poles above ground versus the cost of putting the lines underground. There was talk of putting the power poles behind the buildings, but that brought concerns about encroaching on railroad right of way west of the highway.

Ann Hartnell, representing the village's economic development group, recalled about three years ago they were told about possible grants from WPS for lighting and other downtown improvements. Radtke thought \$67,000 was the number used. Others on the board agreed, but the WPS spokesmen did not. They will check. Janis said in any case, that would be about one third of the cost of a full lighting project.

Janis said the Village of Pound had WPS design their street lights, but the village purchased and installed them and now owns it as a private system.

"Those lights in Pound are beautiful," Radtke commented, "But we should ask them how much it costs to keep the lights on."

Trustee Kellen Stumbris asked about decorative banners, which led to a discussion on new rules governing size and height restrictions. Each must be under 800 square inches, and must be at least 15 1/2 feet above the road surface unless they are far enough off the road.

Hartnell said of all the poles in Wausaukee right now, only nine are tall enough to legally hold banners. To a question from Radtke, Joanis said the DOT allows banners to be strung across the highway, but they also need to be at least 15 1/2 feet above the surface, so there is question of finding poles high enough to support them. WPS does not allow them on their poles.

Village president Jeff Townsend, summarizing what the evening's discussions had accomplished, said Joanis will look into design costs for both poles and underground service. If there is a continuous linked cobra head street light system that meets both DOT specifications and federal guidelines, the DOT will pay half the cost. Joanis will check into the possibility of mounting cobra head lights to existing poles to minimize clutter.

Mulvey said the DOT wants designers to look at filling in ditches wherever possible, which created some concern for the Village Board because the ditches currently are used as detention ponds to prevent flooding from excess runoff. Mulvey said that should be taken care of when they redo the storm sewers, since all the hydrology is being taken into account. To a question from Radtke about water problems by the Van Buren Apartments, Mulvey said that will be taken care of too. "When we looked at that, we couldn't believe it," he commented. The storm sewer lines there are only 10 inches, and they need to be 24 inches. Replacement will be done in 2013 with other Hwy. 180 improvements and changes for the detour route. Costs of this work will be assessed to the DOT project budget and not to the village.

Mulvey and Joanis are to collect as much information as possible and report back to the board not less than six months.

The board's regular monthly meeting at 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 10 is to include a report from Tim Polzin of NEWCAP on progress on the old school project.