

# Ridge Pike road project in Plymouth disrupts neighborhood



Workers widen Ridge Pike near School Lane in Plymouth as part of Lafayette Street expansion project in Plymouth Wednesday, April 6, 2016. *Gene Walsh — Digital First Media*

By [Carl Rotenberg](#), The Times Herald | Posted: 04/08/16, 12:26 PM EDT

PLYMOUTH >> The reshaping of Ridge Pike in the Black Horse neighborhood between Conshohocken Road and School Lane has disrupted business and disturbed homeowners in the area since spring 2015.

Louis Caputo Jr., the owner of Louis Auto Sales on Ridge Pike, said the construction work “destroyed my sales.

“I’ve lost 75 percent of my business,” he said. “In a regular month I sell 15 to 20 cars.”

On Wednesday, the work crews closed off both driveways for his business to pave Ridge Pike and Lucetta Street. The new curbing, which surrounds his business, was installed without curb cuts and will be corrected in the future, Caputo said.

Matt Sergio, the owner of Sergio’s Tailor Shop on Ridge Pike, said the effect on his business has been “horrible.”

“It has been very inconvenient for my customers,” Sergio said. “It’s a mess.”

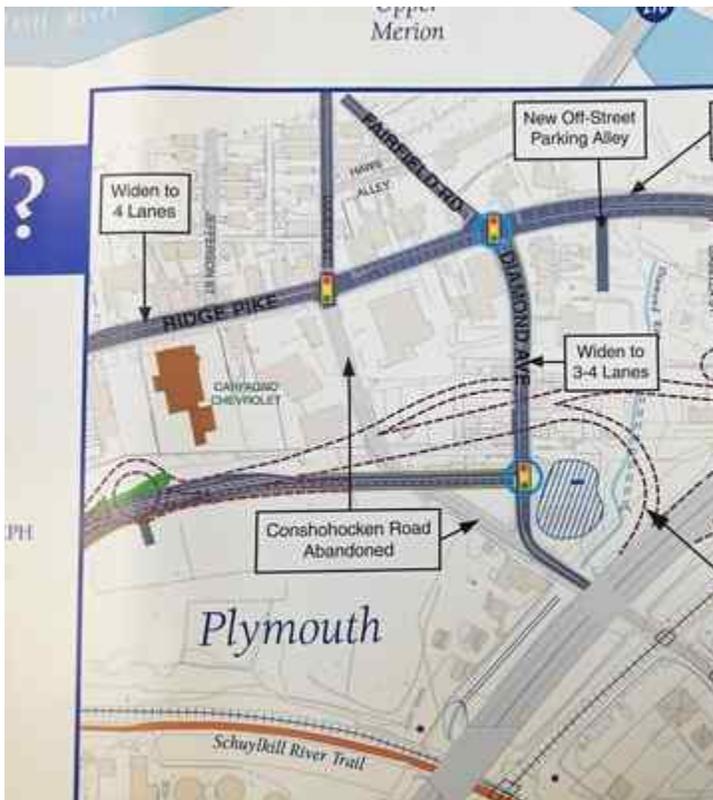
Sergio has occupied the same location on Ridge Pike for 18 years.

“It can’t be finished soon enough for me,” he said. “You have to bear some pain to reap some fruit.”

The \$12.8 million project started in 2015 with new stormwater drainage and sewer upgrades on the eastbound lanes as Ridge Pike was widened, said Matthew Edmond, the transportation section chief for the Montgomery County Planning Commission. Diamond Avenue was widened and realigned to connect to Fairfield Avenue on Ridge Pike to create a new pathway for Conshohocken Road traffic. An alley was built behind the Diamond Avenue homes to give better access to nine properties off Ridge Pike.

This year the contractor, J.D. Eckman Inc. of Atglen, Chester County, will rebuild the westbound lanes of Ridge Pike from Conshohocken Road to School Lane. At the same time, the section of Ridge Pike, from Conshohocken Road to the Norristown municipal line at Ross Street, will be widened and repaved.

“One side will be rebuilt at a time and traffic will be restricted to one lane in each direction during construction,” Edmond said. “The roadway will have a travel lane in each direction and a center turning lane.”



Ridge Pike will be widened to five lanes that include turning lanes. Diamond Avenue will connect to Conshohocken Road and become the direct connection to Ridge Pike where a new traffic signal will be installed. When the new connecting roads are completed, the section of Conshohocken Road, from Ridge Pike down to Diamond Avenue, will be closed to traffic. The dotted lines on the drawing show where new Pennsylvania Turnpike exit and entrance ramps will be built sometime after 2020. *Carl Rotenberg — Digital First Media*

The short section of Conshohocken Road, between Ridge Pike and Diamond Avenue, will be closed and traffic will be routed up Diamond Avenue to a new traffic light at Ridge Pike.

The majority of Conshohocken Road will keep that street name but it will change to Diamond Avenue near the Lafayette Street traffic light.

Ridge Pike will be widened to four and five lanes, from School Lane to Ross Street, Edmond said.

The previously built Lafayette Street extension will be connected to a new traffic light at Diamond Avenue as one of the last project elements before final paving work is completed.

“Some construction work may be finished in spring 2017,” Edmond said. “They are ahead of schedule now, but it just depends on how things work in 2016.”

There will be a pause in construction on Ridge Pike between spring 2017 and the start of 2019 when another Ridge Pike widening project begins that includes the reconstruction of three bridges in Plymouth.

Dean Eisenberger Sr., the Plymouth council chairman, said the Ridge Pike road project will “benefit the residents of Plymouth and the business community by relieving traffic congestion, improving traffic flow” and opening up Conshohocken Road to new commercial development in the future.

“It has been a difficult time during the construction. It is difficult for the commuters as well as the residents,” Eisenberger said. “We know there are problems with it but there is light at the end of the tunnel.”

The plans for a 5,051-square-foot Wawa store with 12 fuel pumps and 50 parking spaces was approved in December 2015 by council for the former Norris Sales parcel located between the Conshohocken Road and Diamond Avenue intersections.

“The approval of the Wawa in 2015 was coincidental. They had been looking for a location on Ridge Pike for years,” Eisenberger said. “It is a good fit for the area.”

Eisenberger said Plymouth officials would work on making it easier for commercial developers to “develop the two miles along Conshohocken Road.”

Cindy Mateja, a resident of Diamond Avenue for 40 years, said the construction crews had been very helpful in building ramps for her handicapped brother, who lives with her.

“I’m not happy with the whole project,” Mateja said. “It (Diamond) was a great little street and now we’ll be across from a highway that will go into the (Pennsylvania) turnpike.”

Mike Walski of Diamond Avenue called the road project, “awful.”

“You’re disturbed in the morning by construction vehicles and the parking is compromised,” he said. “I’m looking forward to it being finished.”

Walski said he had built a fenced-in area for his 8- and 9-year-old children to play in the back yard because he was concerned about the 18-wheel trucks that would soon be using Diamond Avenue to reach Ridge Pike.

Danielle Battaglia, the sales manager for Battaglia Auto Sales, said the used car dealer had moved from a Conshohocken Road address in September 2014 to a location on Ridge Pike when the Conshohocken Road land was condemned for the Lafayette Street extension project.

“We’re definitely in a better location on Ridge Pike. We’re out in the open now,” Battaglia said. “I don’t mind the traffic. People stare at our store when they are stuck in traffic.”

She said the company relies on Internet traffic and referrals to sustain the business.

Starting in 2019, a \$25.6 million Ridge Pike improvement project will rebuild three bridges on Ridge Pike that cross the Norfolk Southern rail lines with two bridges and a Plymouth Creek bridge in Plymouth. Ridge Pike will be widened to provide two lanes in each direction, a center-turn lane and a sidewalk. The Montgomery County project is in final design but has not been bid out yet, Edmond said.

“A year ago the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission committed to spending \$45 million for

the Lafayette Street interchange with the turnpike, The project for the interchange is expected to be built after 2020,” Edmond said.

The timing of this project is closely tied to when the commission can install a cashless tolling system for the entire turnpike system, he said.

The project will include rebuilding the Ridge Pike bridge over the turnpike to widen it for a westbound exit ramp off the turnpike.

The westbound exit and entrance ramps for the turnpike will connect directly into the Lafayette Street extension. The eastbound exit and entrance ramps will be connected to Ridge Pike near the new bridge.

One related road project that will not affect traffic on Ridge Pike will be Phase 3 of the Lafayette Street extension project, from Barbadoes Street to Ford Street in Norristown. The two-year, \$35 million project will start in spring 2017. It will widen Lafayette Street, relocate the Schuylkill River Trail by eliminating the raised viaduct and install a linear park for the relocated recreational trail. Funding is 80 percent from federal highway funds and 20 percent from Montgomery County.

A business owner on Ridge Pike, who requested anonymity, said that people benefited from the traffic on Ridge Pike in Plymouth and called the ongoing road project an example of “progress.”

“This is called the evolving of a town,” he said. “If you want the benefits of progress you have to work with it. Progress is going to come.”

Contact Carl Rotenberg at 267-907-6137 (c) and 484-679-8476.