

Thursday, September 24, 2009

Changes Slated to Start in 2011

By: CARL ROTENBERG, Times Herald Staff

NORRISTOWN — Two major roadway projects, the Lafayette Street corridor extension to the Pennsylvania Turnpike and the reconstruction of Markley Street, are expected to transform Norristown starting in 2011.

The proposed reconstruction of the Norristown sewage treatment plant at Ford Street is expected to improve Norristown's Schuylkill River waterfront starting after 2017. The current plan is to move the plant downstream to the Nicolet Corp. parcel to open up the Norristown waterfront to development.

The Montgomery County Planning Commission transportation planning chief Leo Bagley and Norristown Municipal Waste Authority (NMWA) executive director Barry Thompson described the three projects Wednesday morning to the board of the Greater Norristown Corp.

Construction of the four-lane road connection from Lafayette and Ford streets to Conshohocken Road has been moved up to 2011 and 2012 to show early progress on the overall, \$125 million Lafayette Street project, Bagley said.

Ridge Pike intersection construction at Diamond Avenue and at a new "connector road" to the Lafayette extension would be completed in 2013 and 2014. Widening and rebuilding the existing Lafayette Street from Barbadoes to Ford streets in Norristown would be completed in 2015 and 2016.

The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission will build the EZ-pass toll plaza and entrance and exit ramps on the turnpike from 2014 to 2017.

"We want to go to (construction) bids in late 2010 to get construction started on the first phase in 2011," Bagley said. "Montgomery County purchased the first parcel, a row house, out at the interchange area last week. We want to complete acquisitions before we go out to bid."

The Ridge Pike and Lafayette Street reconstruction work will cost about \$58 million with 80 percent coming from the state Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and a 20 percent match from Montgomery County. Final design costs of \$14 million will be split in a similar fashion. The Turnpike Commission will spend about \$63 million on the interchange.

"The county has said the Lafayette Street project is a priority," Bagley said.

Rebuilding Markley Street, from Main Street to Johnson Highway, will begin in 2012 with work on the first phase from Elm Street to Johnson Highway. The two-year phase,

under PennDOT leadership and financing, will rebuild sewers and infrastructure, add streetscapes, “textured crosswalks,” parking bays and street lighting. The roadway will have double-turn lanes onto Johnson Highway.

Northbound traffic will be detoured onto DeKalb Street during construction.

Construction on the second phase, from Main Street to Elm Street, will follow in 2013 and 2014.

“This is a big project,” Bagley said. “The estimated cost is \$45–\$50 million.”

Mark Chalphin, the chairman of the Greater Norristown Corp., said, “these plans will transform the area.”

Chalphin added a tongue-in-cheek remark: “I think I’ll move from Norristown for about five years.”

The NMWA and Norristown are pursuing plans to move the treatment plant starting in 2017 or 2019, Thompson said. The smaller land available for the new plant will be adequate for improved sewage treatment designs that require less acreage.

“If we move it downstream,” Thompson said, “we open that whole corridor for development. There are a lot of things we can do with development (on the riverfront).”

On a related sewer issue, Thompson said the 2010 sewer lateral inspection program for the owners of homes being sold after January 2010 would cost between \$300 and \$400. If repairs to the lateral are required by the inspection, the homeowner will be responsible for repairs. Funds equal to 125 percent of the estimated costs can be escrowed if repairs cannot be completed before the property settlement.

Carl Rotenberg can be reached at crotenberg@timesherald.com or 610-272-2500, ext. 350.

© 2009 timesherald.com, a **Journal Register** Property