

Funds Would Open Gate for Revitalization of the Lafayette Street Corridor

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COURTHOUSE -- The Montgomery County roads and bridges department pencilled in \$600,000 to fund proposed access improvements for downtown Norristown.

However, the county commissioners must still approve the three-year allocation of county dollars when they finalize their capital improvement budget at the end of the year.

Roads and bridges Director Donald Colosimo Tuesday asked the county commissioners for the \$600,000 to fund a traffic engineering study and design engineering for the Lafayette Street corridor.

The \$600,000 (\$100,000 next year and \$250,000 in each of the following two years) represents 20 percent of the \$3 million price tag for the engineering study and design phase of the project. The federal government would pick up the remaining 80 percent, according to county officials.

The total cost of the project, including construction, is estimated to be almost \$40 million, according to the Lafayette Street Corridor Study unveiled last month.

The study was commissioned by the county commissioners in their continuing efforts to revitalize the borough.

Improving access to the downtown area and riverfront is key to the economic development of the borough, according to the commissioners and a 10-member Norristown revitalization committee.

The study recommendations include:

-- Construction of an exit ramp from the Dannehower Bridge to Lafayette Street to avoid traffic tie-ups on Markley Street.

-- Widening the DeKalb Street underpass at Lafayette Street.

-- Construction of a new electronic toll ramp from the Pennsylvania Turnpike that would connect to the west end of an extended Lafayette Street in Plymouth Township.

-- Visual enhancements, streetscape improvements and improvements for pedestrians along Lafayette and Main Streets.

The county invested \$61,000 in the study that recommended these improvements.

The commissioners Tuesday accepted Colosimo's proposed capital expenditure without comment.

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