

# Montgomery County Commissioners approve funding for Lafayette Street Extension, Norristown

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NORRISTOWN — A project on the books for more than a decade cleared a big hurdle Thursday morning when the Montgomery County Commissioners approved a portion of the funding for the Lafayette Street Extension Project.

The project involves extending Lafayette Street in Norristown to the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Upon completion, it is expected to alleviate traffic headaches along Main Street and Ridge Pike east.

The commissioners approved a resolution Thursday to update a PennDOT reimbursement agreement for the project.

“This is a major milestone day for the Lafayette Street project,” said Leo Bagley, assistant director of the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC). “We’ve been at this for, probably, a dozen years, and we’re getting our final legal work in place for our first-time draft.”

The MCPC hopes to advertise the first contract in April, award the lowest bidder in June and begin construction in August, Bagley said.

“We are in terrific shape,” he told the commissioners.

Demolition began in May with the takedown of a home along Diamond Avenue.

The \$60 million project will extend Lafayette Street into Plymouth Township, providing motorists for an alternative to Main Street. It is expected to help revitalize the downtown Norristown area.

The Lafayette Street project and the start of the Markley Street improvement — scheduled for Monday — together represent more than \$100 million investment in Norristown, commissioners Vice Chairwoman Leslie Richards said.

“This will create new redevelopment opportunities along Lafayette Street, as well as really change the image of Norristown,” she said. “It’s going to be very exciting, to allow people to come in, come through and go around Norristown very easily. It will be great for businesses here.”

The first cars should be on the roadway by late 2016.

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