

<http://www.timesherald.com/general-news/20141023/commissioners-award-second-contract-in-norristowns-lafayette-street-project>

Commissioners award second contract in Norristown's Lafayette Street project

By [Dan Clark](#), *The Times Herald*

POSTED: 10/23/14, 3:01 PM EDT | UPDATED: 3 DAYS AGO
[1 COMMENT](#)



View of Ridge Pike at Diamond Avenue where phase 2 of the Lafayette Street Expansion project will take place. Gene Walsh — The Times herald

NORRISTOWN >> [A little more than a year after construction crews broke ground on the first phase of the Lafayette Street extension project](#), the Montgomery County commissioners awarded a contract for the second phase of the project on Wednesday.

The \$12.8 million dollar contract was awarded to J.D. Eckman, Inc. of Atglen, Pa. J.D. Eckman, Inc. is not the same company that worked on the first phase of the project. Construction on the second phase of the multi-million dollar project is slated to begin in the first quarter of 2015.

“It’s very typical for a transportation project of this size to be phased,” commissioners’ vice-Chairwoman Leslie Richards said. “It’s just easier. You don’t want to give the construction management of the entire project to one firm. It’s just kind of checks and balances.”

The bidding process for the project is not done by the county, but is done by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and it is incumbent upon the county to award the contract to the bidder PennDOT suggests. Eighty percent of the funding for the entire project comes from the federal government and 20 percent comes from the county.

Phase two of the project will extend Lafayette Street to Diamond Avenue in Plymouth Township. Phase two will also reconstruct and widen Diamond Avenue from the Pennsylvania Turnpike Bridge to the Norristown border at Ross Street.

The first phase of the road construction involves extending Lafayette Street from Ford Street in Norristown to Conshohocken Road. Aside from paving the roadway, crews need to put up 12-foot sound walls along a stretch of the extension to stop noise made by cars from bothering residents who live on Ridge Pike. Crews will also begin creating a landscaped median. The first phase of the project, which started in August 2013, is expected to be completed by December.

Phase three will reconstruct Lafayette Street from Barbadoes Street to Ford Street. This will include widening east of DeKalb Street and installing new traffic signals, sidewalks and streetscape. The contract for the third phase has not gone out to bid yet, [though an online brochure detailing the project](#) states the construction on the third phase will begin in 2016.

The goal of the project is to decongest traffic in Norristown, but to also create easy access to Norristown from the Turnpike, so travelers can make use of the arts centers and patronize businesses in the area. The extension project will also open up the Schuylkill River to Norristown and its residents, which Commissioner Bruce L. Castor Jr. says will revitalize the area.

“Along the river from Manayunk all the way out to Royersford, Conshohocken, West Conshohocken, we see what developing the waterfront and improving the traffic flow does for a community,” Castor said at the meeting. “The significance of the Lafayette Street project is designed to bring them together in a fashion such that people will come to Norristown and patronize the businesses, utilize the arts, take advantage all of the amenities. “All of those things don’t happen unless the traffic flow from the Turnpike is able to get in here,” Castor said.

“This project, I think more than any other project we’re working on now is going to be transformational for the county, for the region, for Norristown,” Richards said.

Richards explained that, once completed, the project will cut down traffic and provide a lot of relief for anyone getting in and out of the area.

“It’s needed and people are really excited we’re doing it,” Richards said.

In July, [the commissioners visited the site where the first phase of the project was being put together along with Leo Bagley](#), a transportation planner at the county's planning commission, and all said the project was on time.

“What this is going to look like, with the landscaping we're doing, is we're going to change the look of how people come out of Norristown,” Bagley said during the tour in July.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Reach the author at dclark@timesherald.com or follow Dan on Twitter: [/Danclark08](#).