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Project timed to coincide with Hwy. 33 widening, March completion expected

Amid the clamor of Highway 33 reconstruction, work has begun on the expansion of Schmit Bros. Ford, 925 E. Green Bay Ave., Saukville.

THE GROUND-BREAKING ceremony for the 10,000-square-foot expansion of Schmit Bros. Ford in Saukville drew an array of business leaders and village officials. Tossing the first shovels of dirt at the construction site were (from left) builder Bob Poch of Keller, Inc., Saukville Village Trustee Mike Krocka, Village Administrator Dawn Wagner, Village President Barb Dickmann, Mike and Bo Schmit, Maureen Schmit, Keller architect Steve Klessig, Jim Schmit, Rob Helm of Port Washington State Bank, Matt Weber and Jessie Scott, both of Ford Motor Co. Within days of the groundbreaking, the footprint of the addition began to take shape. Dealership officials expect the project to be completed by March 1.

Photos by Sam Arendt

Ground was broken for the 10,000-square-foot addition on Thursday, Oct. 13. Within a matter of days, the brick-clad north facade of the existing building was demolished and excavation had begun for the new footings.

“We were just out walking around the construction site and it is really going to be big. You don’t realize that just by looking at the drawings, but it is going to be quite a bit larger,” said Mike Schmit, co-owner of the dealership.

When the work is done, the dealership will feature a more customer friendly drive-through service department. The project also includes the addition of a new showroom and offices.

Schmit said the building design incorporates the new open concept developed by Ford Motor

Co.

The exterior will be split stone, similar to the finish used on the adjacent Schmit Bros. Dodge dealership.

During the construction process, the Ford dealership's close affiliation with the neighboring Dodge store will be apparent to customers.

"Because the front of the Ford building is gone now, we are having our customers come to the Dodge building. If they are coming in for service, we'll bring their car to the Ford shop and bring it back when it's done," Schmit said.

The Ford dealership's inventory of vehicles is temporarily being kept on a vacant lot immediately west of the Dodge facility.

Schmit said construction crews are scrambling to make sure the building is enclosed before the chilling temperatures of November settle in.

The project will include extensive asphalt work, with crews hoping to complete the initial phase before Thanksgiving. Final paving will have to wait until spring, Schmit said.

Dealership officials said the expansion project, combined with the Highway 33 reconstruction in the front of the business, will allow long-needed improvements to the access drive to be made.

Two narrow driveways to the Ford dealership will be replaced by a single, expanded drive between the two auto dealers.

Despite all the work that needs to be done, Schmit was optimistic the project will meet its completion schedule.

"The move-in date is March 1, and at this point there is no reason we shouldn't be able to meet that," he said.

An added emphasis on timeliness accompanies the project because dealership officials want the new building to be in place for the business' 100th anniversary in 2012.