

Keeping customers during Hwy. 33 project is a cooperative effort

Right on schedule, the start of the road construction season is kicking into gear and the brunt of the local confusion will be centered on the Highway 33 corridor.

Waiting out traffic tie-ups and following designated detour routes may be irritating for commuters, but the prospect of lost traffic can be much more devastating for local businesses.

A case in point was the state Department of Transportation's closing of a section of Grand Avenue in Port Washington this week. The road will be closed through May.

The stretch between Tower and Portview drives will be the first section of roadway to feel the finishing touches on the reconstruction of Highway 33.

Most of the \$12.5 million project — which runs from Tower Drive to the Milwaukee River overflow bridge adjacent to Port Washington State Bank in Saukville — will be done with traffic present.

However, the east end of the construction zone is a residential neighborhood that is going to retain its two-lane roadway, which makes it impossible to keep the road open while work is being done.

Although residents will have access to their homes throughout the construction, other motorists are being directed to use Highway 32 and Highway LL as alternate routes.

Having endured one construction season last year, businesses on the fringe of the construction area are already concerned about how the two-month detour will affect them. They know their turn to put up with the return of the noise, dust and heavy-vehicle traffic is just around the corner.

DOT Project Communication Manager Emlynn Grisar said the state is very much aware of how disruptive road construction can be to businesses.

"The Wisconsin Department of Transportation recognizes businesses located in work zones have special needs," Grisar said.

She said access to businesses on Highway 33 will be maintained throughout the construction, although it might be more than a bit sloppy.

"It's critical that customers have access to businesses and that they continue to visit them, regardless of any road inconvenience. Through communication and cooperation, businesses can not only survive but thrive when road construction comes to town," Grisar said.

Expecting anything but business as usual

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Because business conflicts are a routine experience for the state during road construction, the DOT has developed a workbook on what measures can be taken to ensure customer access is maintained.

That document can be accessed at www.dot.wisconsin.gov/business/engrserv/itt/workbook.htm.

Locally, business owners and other concerned residents are invited to attend bi-weekly construction meetings that map work progress and issues that have developed.

The local sessions are held every other Tuesday at 3 p.m., at the DOT's field office, 201 N. Freeman Dr., Port Washington.

Grisar said any issues that arise in the construction zone can be reported by calling the DOT's regional office, (262) 548-5902.

The Highway 33 reconstruction project, which is expected to continue into fall, will widen the roadway to four lanes and create roundabouts at Highway LL in Port Washington and Market Street and Northwoods Road in Saukville.