

Budget not expected to delay Hwy. 33 project

Written by Kristyn Halbig Ziehm
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State transportation secretary tells local officials that long-awaited road widening is still set to start this year

Gov. Scott Walker's proposed budget won't delay the long-awaited reconstruction of Highway 33 from Port Washington to Saukville, officials said Tuesday.

"The Highway 33 project is still scheduled to be let this spring," Department of Transportation Secretary Mark Gottlieb said Tuesday. "That project schedule is not affected by the state budget."

The work, which will extend from Tower Drive in Port Washington west to an area east of Highway W in Saukville, involves replacing the two-lane road with a four-lane divided highway, complete with turn lanes, curb and gutter, sidewalks, bike lanes, landscaping and new lighting.

The Highway LL overpass would be removed and replaced by a roundabout, one of three traffic circles included in the project. The others are in Saukville, at Northwoods Road and Market Street.

City Administrator Mark Grams said he recently checked on the project, saying he "went straight to the top" and talked to Gottlieb, a former Port Washington mayor and 60th District Assembly representative.

"He said there won't be a problem, that everything's still good to go," Grams said.

On Tuesday, the Common Council approved a utility relocation agreement needed to bury the power lines along the highway.

Public Works Director Rob Vanden Noven said bids for the reconstruction project will be opened by the DOT on April 12.

"I would guess we'll have at least a half-dozen bidders," he said.

Funding for the project has already been approved, he noted, and the DOT is working to expedite the project because of an aggressive timeline. Work on the road is expected to begin in mid-May, when the Highway LL overpass is removed, Vanden Noven said, and be completed by the end of the year, with the exception of landscaping.

"I'm sure it's going to take the entire construction period," he said. "It's a lot of work to do in a short period of time,"

If the contractor does not meet the project timeline, he will be assessed liquidated damages.

Throughout the project, Highway LL will be closed between Willow Road and Aster Street, Vanden Noven said.

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Temporary lanes will then be constructed so traffic can continue to flow between Port and Saukville throughout the year, he said.

The only substantial detour on Highway 33 will occur between Tower and Portview drives in Port Washington in the fall, Vanden Noven said. There isn't enough room to create temporary lanes on this stretch of road, he said, necessitating the detour.

"I think the disruption should be minimized," he said. "Like any construction project, there's going to be dust, noise and some confusion."