

https://www.heraldpalladium.com/news/napier-avenue-road-diet-approved/article_d03735a3-bf9b-5af0-9190-953748c7dc4b.html

TOP STORY

Napier Avenue road diet approved

Work expected to start after July 4

By LOUISE WREGE HP Staff Writer

May 16, 2020

Napier Avenue, between the bridge over the St. Joseph River and 450 feet east of Union Avenue, is expected to be reduced from four to three lanes by the end of the year.

The Berrien County Board of Commissioners approved the second leg of the Napier Avenue project Thursday.

The section between the river and Colfax Avenue was slated to be repaved and restriped last year but was delayed due to problems with the contractor.

Project Engineer Kevin Stack with the county's road department said that the contractor is expected to start working on the first part of the project after July 4, with the second part, costing almost \$900,000, to start after Labor Day. The county's portion of the project is \$303,385, with the rest of the money coming from the state.

Stack said the intersections of Napier Avenue with Colfax and Union avenues will remain five lane intersections.

Thursday's unanimous vote approving the second leg of the project happened after a lengthy discussion, with some commissioners questioning if reducing the number of lanes will make the road safer or will increase traffic congestion.

Stack said that the Michigan Department of Transportation has done several studies showing that the number of accidents is reduced on most roads that go from four lanes to one lane in each direction with a turning lane in the middle.

"A road diet has been proven to be a natural traffic calming fix," he said. "When you put a person in a car in a tighter environment, they naturally don't feel as comfortable and slow down, giving you those slower speeds."

Right now, people drive faster in the left lane as they pass slower drivers and run into trouble when someone in the left lane is stopped to turn left.

In addition, Stack said there will be wider shoulders on both sides of the road for nonmotorized traffic. Because there are no sidewalks along Napier Avenue, people walk in the grass or on the side of the road.

“Right now, you have people (walking and biking) in the traveling lane,” he said. “We want to get them out of the travel lane and into a designated shoulder where vehicles are not traveling.”

He said St. Joseph Township has plans to put in sidewalks along its portion of Napier Avenue in 2022.

After the meeting, Administrator Bill Wolf said that if reducing Napier Avenue to three lanes doesn't work, they can always restripe the road and make it four lanes, again.

“The important thing is that the road (will stay) the same from curb to curb,” he said. “They are not changing the asphalt footprint of that road. ... It's just a wider shoulder.”

Slack said during the meeting that he doesn't want the project to start before July 4 because warmer temperatures mean the asphalt can be placed better.

“We're doing an innovative design on this as far as putting a road fabric down inbetween two layers of asphalt to reduce the amount of time that the reflective cracking comes through from the concrete pavement underneath,” he said.

The project includes milling off the top 2.5 inches of asphalt and redoing concrete joints that are bad.

Contact: lwrege@TheHP.com, 932-0361, Twitter: @HPWrege

Louise Wrege

One Simple Hack Keeps Your Blood Sugar Below 100

Blood Sugar Formula | Sponsored

Cheap Senior Apartments in Ft Wayne are Turning Heads

Senior Living | **Search Ads** | Sponsored