

M-189 project starts this spring

Written by Peter Nocerini

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The “jog” on M-189, where north-south traffic has to shift to the right near the credit union building. This year’s M-189 project will straighten out the highway between Boyington and Maple streets.

IRON RIVER—The summer of 2012 will be remembered in Iron River as the year of the U.S. 2 project—when the main highway through town was closed several months and replaced with a new surface, along with new city water and sewer lines. ___PUBLIC___

In 2013, M-189 gets its turn. The 1.15-mile project (Genesee Street to just north of Hiawatha Road) starts in May and continues into October.

The Michigan Department of Transportation also plans a separate project on U.S. 2 just west of Iron River, resurfacing the highway from Ninth Avenue west to Nash Creek, a distance of about 3.3 miles.

Mike Premo, MDOT’s Crystal Falls office manager, and Dave Bradley, design engineer, discussed both projects last week.

Premo said planning for M-189 began about 2006, and it became part of MDOT’s five-year program in 2008. The project is just as extensive as U.S. 2, including replacing city sewer lines.

Why is M-189 being rebuilt?

--Uneven surfaces. “That road has old concrete underneath it,” Premo said, “and that’s part of why you get the bad ride in wintertime.”

--Frost heave from silt in the roadbed. “The soils are bad,” explained Premo. Years ago, sewer work was done on M-189. “They put sand in the trenches that go across the road. The rest of the road heaves up; these trenches don’t. So it traps water, and you don’t get a good ride.”

Like U.S. 2 last summer, the silty M-189 roadbed is being completely replaced. “Normally when we rebuild a road,” said Bradley, “we put a foot and a half of sand, six to eight inches of gravel and five, six inches of hot mix asphalt.

“But because the soils are so bad, we’re going an extra three feet of sand.” Underground drains will also be put in to help move water into storm sewers.

“It will be like our U.S. 2 job when it’s done,” said Bradley. “It will look nice—everything will be new.”

--The credit union curve, where M-189 abruptly shifts to the right about 50 feet.

To remove that “jog,” the roadway will be angled over between Maple and Boyington streets to combine the two segments smoothly. MDOT has already removed one house on the east side of 189, and two more will be removed, along with a garage.

The highway will be moved over enough to create a small city parking lot near Maple Street and the credit union, using angle parking.

“This is an opportunity to address the alignment we have near the credit union,” said Premo, “and take care of some of those frost heave issues.”

Other facts about the project:

--At the same time, the city will replace sanitary sewer from Genesee to Division streets, along with laterals. Some water line work will be done at the Genesee Street intersection.

--Bids will be let in early March. The estimated cost is \$3.5 million, including the city utilities.

--A public meeting will be held around late April.

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--Traffic will continue using M-189 during the project. The east side of 189 will be widened temporarily south of Ross Street.

North of Ross, parallel one-way streets will be used as a detour. Northbound 189 will take Ross east to River Avenue and north to U.S. 2. Southbound 189 will use Third Avenue from U.S. 2 to Ross.

--Temporary traffic lights will be used on M-189 during the project, restricting traffic to one lane. They will only be used in a roughly 500-foot zone near current construction—as the project moves north and south, so will the traffic lights. Most of the highway will have two-way traffic throughout construction, allowing access to businesses and homes.

--The highway is nearly flat now. When done, it will have a slight grade (less than one percent) to improve drainage, with catch basins installed.

--Once the project is finished, M-189 will change from a two-lane to a three-lane highway, with a center lane for left turns. M-189 is already wide enough for three lanes but has never been marked that way.

Right now, MDOT officials are dealing with the myriads of details involved in a project this size, including permits, signs, utilities and working with business owners and home owners along the right of way.

- MDOT is also working on a separate resurfacing project west of Iron River on U.S. 2. This project starts at Ninth Avenue (where last year's project ended) and continues west to Nash Creek, a distance of 3.3 miles.

That project runs from May to September. Its cost is \$1.8 million, and the contract has already been awarded to Northeast Asphalt, a subsidiary of Payne and Dolan.

Premo said the concrete surface east of Gibbs City Road was replaced during the 1970s and has a good base. That area will be resurfaced and get curb replacement along with fixes to drains, catch basins and manholes.

The major work will be in the Brandon Hill area west of Gibbs City Road. "We've got concrete on both sides of that hill, and it rides real rough," said Premo. "We're going to take that concrete off and then mill and resurface.

"It will actually be good road—it will look like new road from here all the way through town."

Traffic will be controlled by lane closures and flagmen. Temporary signals may be used.