

Point fixes coming soon

NEWS, TOP STORIES

Construction slated to start in spring

By **Dillon Davis** - cdavis@aimmediamidwest.com



This rendering shows a view looking east of the proposed improvements to The Point intersection on the east side of Delaware.

Courtesy image | City of Delaware

As the construction phase of the highly-anticipated project to improve The Point intersection (U.S. Route 36/state Route 37) draws near, members of the Delaware City Council received an update on the projected timeline of the project, as well as the costs and impact on the city.

"Since we have not given a formal update in some time, and we have some action items coming up in the near future, we felt it was appropriate that we give this presentation tonight," Deputy City Engineer Jonathan Owen said at the top of the presentation.

Owen began by providing an overview of the project's timeline and where the project currently sits in that timeline. All of the designs for the project have been completed, and most of the necessary land acquisition has been obtained, although Owen said there are still some minor details being finalized.

A final estimate of the project cost will be provided by the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) next month, which will be incorporated into the final necessary legislation being passed by council in December for its share of the funding. The city will then make its final payment to ODOT in January.

Bids for The Point Improvement Project are expected to open on Jan. 26, 2023, with a contract being awarded by ODOT the following month in February. Should the process remain on track, construction on the project is slated to begin sometime in the spring of next year with a targeted completion date of Sept. 30, 2025, written into the contract.

The project is expected to cost a total of \$45.4 million, with much of the funding coming from the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC). Owen provided an updated breakdown of the funding to council, which encompasses both past and future phases of the project and also reflects the rising costs of materials.

MORPC will contribute \$19.8 million to the project, and the Transportation Review Advisory Council is contributing \$11.5 million. ODOT is adding an additional \$3.6 million, leaving the city on the hook for 23% of the total funding at \$10.5 million.

While the overall construction timeframe is expected to span more than two years, Owen noted that traffic will not be impacted during that entire time. However, he later added that travel times and congestion will inevitably be impacted at times during construction.

"The first thing to say is, in complete transparency, I think we all understand that congestion and travel times will increase during construction. There will be times when they may increase significantly depending on what's going on," Owen said.

He added two-way traffic will be maintained throughout the entirety of the construction phases with lanes open in both directions. However, he added there will be 15-minute intervals after midnight on certain weekends when there are full closures of the roads in order to move equipment and install various aspects of the project.

There will also be times throughout the project when Central Avenue and state Route 521 will be closed, according to Owen.

Following the presentation, Mayor Carolyn Riggle noted that when she joined City Council, the estimated cost of The Point project was \$18 million. Now, with such a drastic rise in the cost of the project, she encouraged her fellow council members to be ready for the tough questions that are sure to come from taxpayers.

"It's going to be a tough question to answer for all of us on council," Riggle said. "Because when someone says, 'Yeah, I had to sit at The Point for an extra five minutes,' and now it's costing \$45 million, we're going to have a lot of questions as to is it worth it?"

Riggle went on to say her biggest concern is that, when construction starts, all the necessary materials are accounted for and construction crews aren't tearing things up without being able to proceed with the fix.

"Whoever the contractor is, we have to be certain that before they start anything, all of the supplies are in and available," she said.