

Paving begins on Route 106

Written by Tom Caldwell



The paving crew began putting down the base layer on Route 106 yesterday morning. (Karen Bobotas/for The Laconia Daily Sun)

Project expected to take four weeks

By THOMAS P. CALDWELL, LACONIA DAILY SUN

BELMONT — A road project that includes pavement rehabilitation, bridge decking and intersection safety improvements moved into a new phase on Wednesday with the application of a base layer on the south end of the work zone on Route 106.

Rep. Michael Sylvia (R-Belmont) toured the project yesterday with Paul Busby of Busby Construction Co., Inc., of Atkinson, the general manager of the project, and Larry Major of Pike Industries, which is supplying the aggregate and paving material.

The project, which was part of the state's 10-Year Highway Plan, got underway in June 2016, with federal and state funding. Revenue from the state's four-cent gasoline tax increase accelerated the project, and Sylvia, who did not favor the tax, acknowledged that the gas tax is probably the best option for funding such infrastructure improvements.

As vehicles have become more fuel efficient, gas tax revenues, which fund both highway improvements and the Department of Safety, have declined. To make up for the shortfall, legislators have discussed special assessments for electric and hybrid vehicles which use less – if any – gas but still utilize state highways.

Opponents of the targeted assessments point out that those vehicles tend to be lighter and cause less damage to roads than the larger gas-guzzling vehicles. As the owner of a Toyota Prius, Sylvia also did not

favor that approach to raising the revenue for highway improvements.

He said he would like to see all gas tax revenue going for infrastructure improvements and have the Department of Safety operate from a separate funding source.

"I only have to convince the other 399 members of the House," he said.

Busby said the project, which includes part of the Laconia Bypass as well as a section of Route 106, involves six miles of pavement rehabilitation and deck repairs to three bridges. Up to this point, the company has been doing preparatory work, including upgraded drainage and cutting back the slopes to allow for widening the highway. Some utility poles also had to be relocated as part of the project.

Roadway prep work included grinding down the old pavement and mixing the material with gravel for a new foundation. Busby explained that the pieces of old pavement provide a denser mix which, when packed down, is almost as firm as the road surface will be.

R.M. Piper, Inc., of Plymouth is handling the bridge work, which consists of deck repairs and painting the underside of the bridges on the bypass. Busby said the bridges were fine structurally and just needed new decks.

Wolcott Construction, Inc., of Gilmanton is handling the paving, which consists of a base layer and then a thinner top layer. The paving will take approximately four weeks to complete.

CWS Fence and Guardrail of Andover is providing the guardrails needed for the project.

The project is running pretty much on schedule, Busby said, noting that there were a few bad-weather days, but by working some Saturdays, they were able to make up for lost time.

Heavy traffic has complicated the job but he said they have mostly been able to maintain traffic flow.

"Hopefully, the end product they'll be happy with," he said.

Sylvia asked whether government regulations had been a problem, but both Busby and Major said the permitting, while it took a while, had been completed prior to starting the job. Busby said they did need to seek some routine federal stormwater permits during the project, but they did not hamper the job.



Speed limits were reduced through Belmont on Route 106 as paving crews worked yesterday morning. (Karen Bobotas/for The Laconia Daily Sun)

