

Maryland taking steps to complete Route 219

By Michelle Ganassi

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Maryland officials are preparing for the construction of 1.4 miles of four-lane Route 219 as local officials work to secure funding for the final Pennsylvania section.

Somerset County Commissioner John Vatauk attended a Maryland Department of Transportation meeting Monday where officials outlined plans for the project.

Vatauk said that Garrett County Commissioner Paul Edwards led the meeting. He said Maryland is requesting proposals to design and build a 1.4-mile section of the highway and an interchange to link the roadway to Interstate 68. One business and two dwellings will be affected by the interchange.

“The interchange will be where the interchange is right now on Route 219,” he said. “There will be two roundabouts there: one on the northern side and one on the southern side.”

Vatauk said the roundabouts will keep traffic moving in the area.

Construction is scheduled to begin in 2018. The project has a \$75 million budget.

“They have this thing on the fast track,” he said.

He said that the state has \$95 million to \$96 million, and the remaining money could be used to purchase the rights of way for the final 1.1-mile section to connect to Pennsylvania. About 2.5 miles of the four-lane are unfinished in Maryland. Pennsylvania has 5.5 miles remaining between Meyersdale and the Maryland border.

“Our hope is we will get the money soon,” he said.

About 11 miles of the four-lane highway are under construction between Somerset and Meyersdale.

Vatauk said that once the entire stretch is completed, motorists will be able to travel from Johnstown to Deep Creek, Maryland, in about an hour and will have easy access to Buffalo, New York.

“It’s frustrating that we can’t get funding for our last 5 1/2 miles,” he said. “But we’ve been in contact with the (PennDOT) secretary and we’re working on that.”

Vatavuk, Somerset County Commissioner Gerald Walker and other representatives from the North/South Appalachian Highway Coalition are traveling to Washington, D.C., today to meet with legislators about securing funding for the final section. Vatavuk said people plan to discuss the benefits of the project.

“We just want to make sure the people in Washington know what the people back here think and how important this is to the economy of our region,” he said.

Source: http://www.dailyamerican.com/news/local/somerset/maryland-taking-steps-to-complete-route/article_10f5dad3-7d4b-5a2b-be06-a72b2d9b8f41.html