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MULBERRY & EAST 2ND ROUNDABOUT ROUNDING INTO SHAPE

Despite unforeseen circumstances, contractor confident of meeting June target date

MUSCATINE, Iowa – The roundabout replacing the four-way stop at the intersection of Mulberry Avenue and East 2nd Street is taking shape, but not as quickly as some would hope. The contractor is slightly ahead of schedule and expects to have the roundabout completed by the June 30, 2020, target date.

Concrete work began with the inner circle and now includes portions of the south leg on Mulberry Avenue and the east leg on 2nd Street. Work to complete the west leg and the north leg will proceed in the next several weeks, weather permitting.

The \$2.3 million contract was awarded to Heuer Construction, Inc., of Muscatine at the August 15, 2019, Muscatine City Council meeting with a tentative start date of September 15, 2019. In what is termed a working days contract, the contractor was given 70 working days to complete the project.

However, the start date was pushed back to January 1, 2020, after discussions with local business owners about the impact the work would have on holiday shopping.

The use of working days in the contract is based on certain controlling items such as completing underground work before the doing the grading that would precede the paving. A work day is charged when work is accomplished on a controlling item, but not charged when work cannot be done on the controlling item.

“Work can still be accomplished but if it is not associated with the controlling item, such as underground work, it is not charged as a working day,” Jim Edgmond, City Engineer, said. “The schedule targets June 30 as the completion date but that is not a guaranteed finish date. The contractor could finish before that date or it could take longer depending on the weather.”

The underground work finally began in early January, but progress was slowed as the City sought to complete the purchase of, demolish, and remove two buildings that were in the way of the new roundabout.

When working in an older part of town, you have to expect the unexpected and underground work was further hindered by problems that were unearthed almost with each dig of the shovel. The location of old utilities were not always accurately marked and finding solutions slowed the pace of underground work extending the work into April.

Most of the sub-base preparation and proofing of the sub-base was completed in April but there was still one unexpected underground find that had to be corrected (an old electric vault conflicting with the new sewer line near the 3rd Street intersection).

Weather is always a factor in construction but for this project the weather cooperated for the most part during the early stages of construction, and work was interrupted only a few times by extreme cold and spring storms.

The first concrete was poured in early May with forming up and pouring concrete expected to dominate the rest of the month.

“This is a massive project with a lot of prep work before the first concrete was poured,” Brian Stineman, Public Works Director, said. “There is a lot of concrete yet to be poured before that portion of the project is completed.”

Even while the first concrete was being poured, additional problems were discovered that may not threaten the contract completion date but could interfere with finishing all legs of the roundabout before the end of May. A conflict with a Muscatine Power & Water (MPW) electrical vault on Mulberry Avenue near the intersection with 3rd Street is hoped to be the final underground conflict that needs to be resolved before concrete work can be finished.

MPW and Heuer Construction, Inc., plan on making the modifications to the electrical vault during a 13-hour window on Saturday, May 16, 2020. The modifications will involve a power outage to the HNI facility adjacent to the roundabout. A rain date has been set for Monday, May 25, 2020. The completion of the modifications is key to the completion of the Mulberry legs north of the roundabout center circle.

“The contractor still has half of his working days to complete the contract,” Stineman said. “So in that regards and in regards to work accomplished, he is still ahead of schedule.”

While it is hoped that the majority of concrete work will be completed by the end of May that does not mean that portions of the roundabout will be open to traffic.

“There is still a lot of work to do before we can even think about partially reopen the intersection,” Stineman said.

Included in that is some brick work that will identify pedestrian paths, and some finishing concrete work.

Mulberry Avenue is currently closed from the #1 Alley to 3rd Street and 2nd Street is closed from Mulberry Avenue to Orange Street. Eastbound traffic on Mississippi Drive is detoured at Iowa Avenue to 5th Street to Park Avenue. The detour will remain in effect until the project is completed.