

Highway projects across Mercer County coming to completion

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PRINCETON — From bridge building to road paving, a busy highway construction season for Mercer County is slowly winding down.

More than \$30 million in road and bridge projects have been or will be completed this construction season in Mercer County, and that doesn't include the \$17.5 million King Coal Highway bridge project under construction near Bluefield, according to West Virginia Division of Highways District 10 Administrator John McBrayer.

"We've been pretty busy," McBrayer said. "The core maintenance is a big piece of it. And we are doing other things too. Now when we pave a road, we widen the shoulder. Widening of the shoulders was put in place by Gov. Manchin himself. He made the mandate last year. He made it pretty clear that he wanted that done. It creates a whole lot safer highway. Before when you paved out on a two-lane road, the white line was almost at the edge of the road. Now when you widen that shoulder, you can have almost two feet of paving off the white line. It's a real improvement."

McBrayer said millions of dollars in road and bridge improvement projects have been completed, or are nearing completion, in Mercer County.

The local projects include:

- A \$137,000 intersection improvement project at Glenwood Elementary School. The project is now complete, and improves safety at the intersection.
- A \$900,000 paving project at Gardner Lake is now complete.
- The \$580,000 Bluefield-Bland Road paving project is now complete.
- A \$7 million bridge replacement project at Princeton that crosses Interstate 77. The project is now complete.
- A \$6 million dual interstate bridge project continues but will be completed this year. The Rocky Hollow and Ingleside Road bridges are being redecked.
- The \$620,000 Bluestone Gorge Bridge replacement project remains under construction but will be completed this year.

- The \$1.5 million Duhring Arch Bridge project near Montcalm is now under construction, but won't be completed until next year.
- The \$17.5 million King Coal Highway, Interstate 73/74 bridge construction project near Bluefield, remains under construction. It is scheduled for completion in late 2009.

While the highway construction season is slowly winding down, McBrayer said projects like the King Coal Highway bridge will continue as long as winter weather allows.

“For a while it (the King Coal Highway bridge) was ahead of schedule,” McBrayer said. “King Coal has gone so well because we've had a fairly mild winter. It all depends upon Mother Nature. If she deals us a mild winter, we will move on. If she doesn't we will move to a stop.”

McBrayer said the DOH maintains a regular schedule for patching pot holes, pulling ditches and mowing. At the present time, citizens must call the DOH offices in Princeton to see when their community is scheduled for mowing or pot hole patching.

However, the DOH is hoping in the near future to have the maintenance schedule program placed on the Internet.

“At sometime in the not too distant future, we will have that information online where folks will be able to access it, McBrayer said. “It's kind of a different approach. It puts a lot of accountability on us.”

McBrayer said the DOH hopes to have the local maintenance schedule on the Internet soon.

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