

# U.S. 340, other W.Va. projects discussed with state officials

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CHARLES TOWN, W.Va. —

Warren Mickey might have exaggerated, but he minced no words Tuesday telling Division of Highways officials they were moving too slow on plans to widen U.S. 340 South from Charles Town to the Virginia line.

“You can’t buy a gallon of milk between Charles Town and Berryville (Va.),” said Mickey, adding that widening the [road](#) would bring more stores to the corridor.

Mickey, a member of the Eastern Panhandle Transportation Authority, will have to be patient.

J. Lee Thorne, engineer and manager of DOH’s seven-county District Five office in Burlington, W.Va., said the U.S 340 South project is still unfunded.

With Thorne at Tuesday’s transportation authority meeting were Ken Clohan, traffic engineer in Morgan, Berkeley and Jefferson counties; and Randy Sigley, traffic technologist in Hampshire, Hardy, Mineral and Grant counties.

The authority has been pushing the project to widen the four miles of two-lane U.S. 340 South from Charles Town to the Virginia line where it is four lanes.

Mickey said modernizing that stretch would give the three Panhandle counties access to Routes 7, 50 and 66 in Virginia and “even to Interstates 81 and 95, all on four-lane roads. It would promote tourism and economic development,” he said.

The authority is made up of three members each from Morgan, Berkeley and Jefferson counties. Kathy Mason, authority chairperson, said it was created by the West Virginia Legislature to advocate for local transportation issues.

It meets every other month.

Among other issues on the minds of authority members were:

- The long-discussed 18.7-mile bypass around Berkeley Springs, W.Va. In addition to bypassing Berkeley Springs, U.S. 522 would be widened to four lanes from Virginia, where it is four lanes, north to the Potomac River.

The project, still unfunded, is estimated to cost nearly \$19 million, Thorne said.

The DOH can only buy right-of-way property on the proposed bypass route if an owner approaches the state with an offer to sell at fair market value. “We have bought some properties,” Thorne said.

Thorne said he would check on the status of the project.

- The ongoing widening of Interstate 81 in Berkeley County from four to six lanes is scheduled for completion in early July, Thorne said.
- He said the DOH also is looking into a dangerous intersection at Old W.Va. 9 and Cattail Run Road in Jefferson County. The problem is poor sight distance. “It’s hard to make a left onto Old Route 9,” he said.
- Construction will soon begin in Charles Town on a new roundabout to replace the four-way stop sign at northbound East Fifth Avenue, southbound Flowing Springs Road (W.Va. 17), westbound Flowing Springs Road from East Washington Street and the eastbound ramp off W.Va. 9 to the stop sign.

Estimated at around \$6 million, Clohan said the roundabout will be built on the W.Va. 9 exit ramp. Southbound Flowing Springs Road traffic will cut west to the circle before the stop sign and East Fifth Avenue traffic will pass west of the stop sign to connect with the circle.

During construction, W.Va. 9 traffic will detour to the next eastbound exit for East Washington Street while Flowing Springs Road and East Fifth Avenue will still use the stop sign.

Completion is scheduled for the fall, Clohan said.