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Waves of work start on 1st Street

By **Josh Stockinger**
jstockinger@dailyherald.com
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Construction for the First Street redevelopment project in St. Charles is about to get messier.

Starting Monday, crews will embark on a months-long effort to rip up and replace the downtown street, block by block.

City Engineer Greg Chismark outlined the work schedule Thursday at a meeting to update the public on the monumental reconstruction project as it enters its second phase.

"This phase has significant impact," Chismark said. "But it's a pretty good schedule and an efficient schedule."

Crews plan to start at Prairie Street and work north toward Route 64 through November. Construction will halt for winter, then resume in the spring.

Work will take place in four stages, with pieces of First Street closed to traffic during construction.

The first stage consists of road rebuilding between Prairie and Indiana streets through July.

Then, the intersection of Indiana and First streets will close while crews rebuild the intersection and put in brick crosswalks.

In late August, contractors will move to the intersection of Illinois and First streets to do storm sewer work and install crosswalks and a traffic signal. This stage will temporarily close the Illinois Street bridge.

Near the end of September, contractors will move along First Street toward Route 64, near the old Manor Restaurant.

Weather is expected to halt work in November. Next spring, crews will wrap up what isn't done and put in a new traffic signal at Route 64.

"Once this is complete, traffic patterns to businesses and residences will return to more normal conditions," Chismark said.

The city is spending about \$2.6 million for the road rebuilding.

When complete, First Street will have two through-lanes with diagonal parking. The reconstruction is part of a \$105 million effort to rebuild downtown with shops, offices and residences.

In the meantime, however, several businesses have voiced concerns about the potential impact of the road closures on their customer traffic.

"This is not acceptable to me," said David Lencioni, owner of the Blue Goose Super Market, which is relocating for the project and will have severely limited access in coming months.

The city is making some efforts to limit the effect of the project, such as putting in temporary access drives and signs, and scheduling construction with business locations in mind, Chismark said.

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