



## Spring Construction Start Planned For Two Keystone Road Roundabouts

By Beth Milligan | March 23, 2022

Construction is planned to start this spring on two new Keystone Road roundabouts at the intersections of Cass Road and River/Beitner roads. Grand Traverse County Road Commission (GTCRC) commissioners will vote Thursday on awarding a \$3.3 million contract to Elmer's Crane and Dozer for the two projects, which will require southbound Keystone Road traffic to use a South Airport Road/US-31 detour for several months.

The two new roundabouts are among several recommended to be built to improve crosstown traffic as part of GTCRC's East-West Corridor Transportation Study. GTCRC recently completed another of those roundabouts, at the corner of Hammond and Four Mile roads, and has been working the last few years on preparations for the Keystone Road roundabouts, including purchasing a home at the corner of Cass and Keystone in 2020 to make way for the redesigned intersection. Once complete, the Cass/Keystone roundabout will include a new entrance into the Keystone Soccer Complex.



The Keystone/River/Beitner roundabout, meanwhile, will feature an access leg leading to a new, combined trailhead on the Keystone Dam property. The trailhead will provide a safer way for park users to access the Keystone Dam property and Natural Education Reserve by combining the county's Keystone Rapids trailhead, currently located on the north side of Beitner Road where it crosses the river, and the Oleson Bridge trailhead. In February, Traverse City commissioners voted to grant an easement to GTCRC for the roundabout construction (<https://www.traverseticker.com/news/city-commissioners-vote-to-seek-legal-opinion-on-mdot-agreement-approve-river-plan-roundabout-easements/>). The city owns approximately 54 acres near the roundabout area that was the site of the former city-owned Keystone Dam, which washed out in 1961. The leg requiring a city easement will provide improved access to a city nursery site that's part of the Natural Education Reserve. City commissioners also agreed to provide a right-of-way agreement to GTCRC for road construction and maintenance.

Construction on the Keystone roundabouts could start in either late April or late May, depending on whether GTCRC commissioners accept a revised schedule proposed by Elmer's. According to GTCRC County Highway Engineer/Manager of Engineering Wayne Schoonover, the originally planned construction timeline is as follows:

#### **April 25, 2022 through June 24, 2022**

- > Keystone, Beitner, and River Roads – Construct up through soil erosion control items and open to traffic by June 24, 2022
- > Keystone, Cass, and the Keystone Soccer Complex – Utility and site clearance to be completed by June 24, 2022

#### **June 27, 2022 through September 2, 2022**

- > Keystone and Cass Roads – Construct up through soil erosion control items and open to traffic by September 2, 2022

- > MDOT Railroad ROW – No work in the MDOT Railroad ROW until July 5, 2022
- > New Entry for the Keystone Soccer Complex (East leg of Roundabout) - Construct up through soil erosion control items. Not to open before existing entrance is closed.

### **September 6, 2022 through September 30, 2022**

- > New and Existing Entries for Keystone Soccer Complex – Simultaneously open the new entry for the Keystone Soccer Complex and close the existing entry to the Keystone Soccer Complex

However, Elmer's offered to shave \$250,000 off its initial construction bid of \$3.598 million – bringing the cost down to \$3.348 million – and to cut four weeks off the proposed 19-week construction schedule if GTCRC allows Elmer's to delay the start date until May 31 and to construct both roundabouts concurrently. GTCRC staff are recommending that commissioners accept that alternative plan. Because of Elmer's promise to shave a month off the construction timeline, the project should still be completed by September even if work doesn't begin until late May. Schoonover says in that scenario, Elmer's will need to submit a new progress schedule to GTCRC showing the shortened construction timeline and when the above milestones will be hit.

According to Schoonover, staged construction and traffic will be "maintained with one-way traffic northbound on Beitner and Keystone Road" during the project period. Southbound Keystone traffic, however, will be detoured around the construction zone via South Airport Road and US-31/M-37 to Beitner Road. In addition to the Elmer's contract, GTCRC commissioners will vote Thursday on awarding a \$450,000 contract to OHM Advisors for construction engineering services for the project.

More roundabouts could still be on the horizon. GTCRC Manager Brad Kluczynski previously told *The Ticker* the county was awaiting safety grant money (<https://www.traverseticker.com/news/roundabouts-are-here-to-stay-with-more-on-the-horizon/>) to build a roundabout at the intersection of Potter Road and Garfield, with GTCRC also evaluating the feasibility of roundabouts at Hammond/Three Mile and Hammond/Garfield. The last big-picture study of roundabout safety conducted by the Michigan Department of Transportation (<https://www.traverseticker.com/news/roundabouts-are-here-to-stay-with-more-on-the-horizon/>) found a 49 percent decrease in total crashes, 79 percent reduction in injury crashes, and 88 percent decrease in fatal and serious injury crashes in single-lane roundabouts. Double-lane roundabouts experienced a 17 percent decrease in total crashes, 57 percent decrease in injury crashes, and 38 percent decrease in fatal and

serious injury crashes. For traffic flow, a sample of roundabouts was taken, with a 65.1 to 93.8 percent reduction in delay when comparing before and after travel times at those intersections.

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