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Winding down: Hammond/4 Mile roundabout opens

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Traffic travels west along Hammond Road through construction of a roundabout this summer.

Record-Eagle file photo/Jan-Michael Stump



TRAVERSE CITY — The intersection of East Hammond and Four Mile roads is open about a month early.

It completes a roundabout that had traffic rerouted for most of the summer, causing back-ups and delays for drivers.

The roundabout opened Friday, but signs that lower the speed limit in the construction zone are still up because there are no street lights yet, said Brad Kluczynski, Grand Traverse County Road Commission manager.

The lights were supposed to arrive in August, but were delayed because of a supplier issue, Kluczynski said. They are expected to be installed by the end of September, he said. The project was done by Team Elmer's.

"Everything is running smoothly and it looks fantastic," said Kathleen Hentschel, a seasonal employee at Groleau's Farm Market, located at 2100 E. Hammond.

The road was open during construction, but only to those traveling westbound. The market stayed open but lost business, especially from those people heading east who would stop by on their way home from work in Traverse City.

But Labor Day was very busy with tourists and regulars, Hentschel said.

"All the people that we haven't seen all summer are coming in," she said.

Kluczynski said he hasn't yet gotten feedback on the roundabout as it has only been open a few days.

"We'll see as people drive through it and get a feel for it," he said.

A bridge on Garfield Road and two bridges on East River Road were given upgrades this year, with the second East River Road bridge near the intersection of Garfield Road nearly done, Kluczynski said. That project also had supplier issues but is now back on track, he said.

"Everything is slowed down," he said. "Anything steel, anything aluminum, anything manufactured is on a delay."

A post-pandemic demand for construction materials — especially steel — is driving delays, with steel prices at an all-time high, according to news sources. The demand is not expected to slow down anytime soon.

Other projects this year included widening Supply Road and reconstructing Walton Road, both of which have been completed. Chip sealing of some roads is now the focus of roadwork, weather permitting, but those are single-day closures, Kluczynski said.

The agency is now looking ahead to next year, when roundabouts will be installed at the intersections of Cass and Keystone roads, and at West River and Keystone/Beitner roads.

Another two large road projects are planned for next year, though where they will be is not yet known, Kluczynski said. Road Commission trustees will select the locations of the projects in October, he said.

With summer work winding down, plowing season is looming. The Road Commission has a fleet of 30 plow trucks in continuous daily use, with another seven spare trucks that may be used a few days a week, if needed. The fleet is on a 12-year rotation, with three new trucks purchased every year.

Trucks used to take seven or eight months from order time to delivery, but now are taking more than a year, Kluczynski said. Two of the three trucks ordered for 2021 that should have been delivered in May still have not shown up, he said, though they will arrive in time for plowing season.

Trucks that were ordered for 2022 that would have normally been delivered in April or May are now expected to be delivered in September or October. Once they arrive they will need to be outfitted and will likely not be ready for the road until January, Kluczynski said.

Another five trucks are waiting for parts that are six months behind, he said.

“We’re making contingency plans on top of contingency plans,” Kluczynski said.

In Traverse City the Park Street bridge opened early to vehicular traffic while waiting for the railings to come in, said John McWerthy, public services assistant with the city engineering department. Temporary barriers are up for now, he said.

The South Cass Street bridge is still under construction, as is the East Eighth Street bridge, which closed in July; both are expected to be closed until November.

Work on the West Front Street bridge is expected to start within the next couple of weeks, McWerthy said. That bridge is a total reconstruct and will be closed until July.

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