

Designed for Readability, New Signs To Be Installed on I-75 Between St. Ignace, Sault

By Karen Gould
New signs with an estimated 20-year life span and more readable will be installed along I-75 this summer on the 63-mile stretch of highway between St. Ignace and Sault Ste. Marie. Signs also will be replaced along business loop I-75 in St. Ignace. The sign project is estimated to cost \$1,610,000 and is scheduled to be completed by this October, said Karrie Abbitt, project engineer with Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) in Newberry. The state's new minimum

speed limits, which allow a five-mile-per-hour increase for trucks, will also be posted this summer, she said. The minimum speed has changed from 45 miles per hour up to 55 miles per hour. Also, truck speeds have been moved up to 60 miles per hour from 55 miles per hour, said Mrs. Abbitt. She said shoulder closures would take place where crews are working and she does not anticipate any lane closures while I-75 signs between St. Ignace and Sault Ste. Marie are replaced. Action Traffic Maintenance of

Flint, the contractor on the job, began drilling holes for new sign posts last week. The most notable difference for drivers is the new lettering style used on the signs, said Mrs. Abbitt. Lettering will be in a font called Clearview and signs will be 20 percent larger than their predecessors, she said. David Deatruck, senior MDOT inspector from the Newberry office, said the new signs also will have new posts made either of steel or wood, depending on the size of the sign. The height, width, and wind load of a sign

determines if wood or steel posts are used, he said. The posts will be set in a breakaway foundation, allowing the sign to fall away from a vehicle if the sign is hit. During the preparation work, Mr. Deatruck said that crews will dig new holes for the signs using an auger. Each sign will have two posts and the anchor hole will be two feet in diameter and seven feet deep. Once the hole is drilled, a metal circular form is dropped into the pit to keep the wall from collapsing before it is filled with reinforcing concrete.



Holes are being drilled for new signs that will replace current ones along both the northbound and southbound lanes on I-75 between Sault Ste. Marie and St. Ignace. Action Traffic Maintenance of Flint is conducting the work, with employees Foreman Don Campbell (left) of Almont and Lyman Krump of Chesaning.

Upper Peninsula Stretch of I-75 To Get \$13 Million Upgrade

By Karen Gould
New state speed limit guidelines in road work zones will affect motorists as they travel along I-75 between the Mackinac Bridge in St. Ignace and the International Bridge in Sault Ste. Marie as three construction projects costing more than \$13 million take place over the next two years. The work zone will have two speed limit signs, the standard speed limit sign and a new one which will require motorists to reduce their speed to 45 miles per hour when workers are present, explained Pete Paramski, Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) delivery engineer of the Transportation Service Center in Newberry. If no workers are present, then drivers will be allowed to travel at the posted speed. The new sign reads, "Where Workers Present 45." Drivers also will see "Work Zone Begins" and "Reduced Speed Zone Ahead" signs, he said.

Work will begin in early May on the three I-75 projects, which include a grade lift, concrete joint and crack repair, asphalt surfacing, and guardrail upgrade, which will occur on a 8.96-mile stretch of both north- and southbound lanes of I-75. Resurfacing will take place at the carpool parking lot at the M-123 and the Mackinac Trail intersection, and the bridges that cross over the Pine River also will receive resurfacing work. Details of the projects were offered to area residents at an MDOT open house at Little Bear East Conference Center in St. Ignace Wednesday, April 19. While traffic will be reduced to one lane during the grade lift and surfacing, the MDOT projects may cause slowdowns and minor delays, though no traffic stops are expected, said Mr. Paramski. The grade lift and surfacing projects are expected to take two years, with a completion date of October 27, 2007, he said. The

northbound lane will be finished in 2006 and the entire project will be completed with the southbound lane being finished in 2007. Initially, the almost nine-mile stretch of highway, beginning north of the M-134 on-ramp and running to the Mackinac-Chippewa county line, was scheduled for road maintenance. At the last minute, however, additional federal funding became available, turning the project into a total reconstruction, explained Mr. Paramski. The work crews will begin the project by clearing trees along I-75. With the roadway being raised, clearing limits need to be widened, Mr. Paramski said. The actual grade lift work is expected to begin in June. Crews will add 12 inches of gravel on top of the current asphalt roadway. This procedure uses the old road surface to support the new pavement, he explained. Paving the surface, shoulder

resurfacing, and restoration work will finish the northbound project by October 27, Mr. Paramski said. During the process, one lane of traffic will be open on the northbound lane and crews will start work on the inside lane. Traffic then will be moved onto the outside lane and the shoulder during the second phase, said Mr. Paramski. There will be no work on I-75 southbound this year, he added. Resurfacing of the carpool lot is expected to be completed this year. On the Pine River bridges, waterproofing membrane and asphalt overlay will be completed on the northbound bridge this year, and on the southbound bridge next year. H and D, Inc. of Petoskey was awarded the construction jobs with a bid of \$12,698,095. Project Manager Jim Pemberton said he expects the projects will create work for approximately 100 people. He also said the company has an historic relationship with I-75. In 1963, the company, then known as Hodgkiss and Douma, completed the final stretch of I-75, which linked St. Ignace and Sault Ste. Marie.

Oops... Going to 'Mackinaw' Island?



This state highway sign just north of St. Ignace misspells Mackinac Island and will be corrected, according to David Deatruck, senior technician with the Michigan Department of Transportation. He surmised it was a temporary replacement resulting after the original sign was damaged last winter. The sign is not a part of the new sign replacement project that is in process on I-75 between St. Ignace and Sault Ste. Marie.

Church Thefts Reported at Pickford

Pickford United Methodist Church and Pickford Church of the Nazarene were broken into in the late evening hours of Sunday, April 23, or early morning of Monday, April 24, Michigan State Police report. At the United Methodist Church on East Church Street, \$100 was stolen and a set of doors were damaged. At the Church of the Nazarene on M-129, \$750 was stolen from proceeds from a youth fundraiser and an office door window was damaged. Those who may have information on these crimes are asked to

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