

# Paving Work Begins, To Stretch From First Street to High Street in St. Ignace

**Road Work:** From page 1

meetings to be held by the state highway department in St. Ignace City Council Chambers each Wednesday at 9 a.m., beginning July 15. Here, community members may receive updates on work plans and progress and bring up any questions or concerns.

One concern voiced by city officials during the open house at city hall Wednesday, July 1, was that access to businesses and the downtown area should not be obstructed.

"If we notice a problem impeding access to a business," said MDOT representative James Lake, "we can adjust."

Mark Sposito, who owns the Mackinac Grille restaurant at the north end of the construction work, said he hopes the project doesn't discourage people who are traveling down US-2 from visiting the downtown area.

"Of course I'm a little worried about it," Mr. Sposito said. "At the same time, I know it has to be done."

He spoke with a representative from the highway department, who gave him a telephone number to call if there were any problems or concerns.

For the majority of the project, one lane of traffic will be open in each direction and access to businesses and residences will remain open, said Peter Paramski, the project's chief engineer.

"We're going to do everything in



our power to keep businesses open," Mr. Paramski said. "We'll try to limit our impact."

He said closing both lanes in either direction and using a flag system would be kept to a minimum, and traffic could flow normally in either direction for "at least 98 per-

cent" of the project. Access may be blocked to certain businesses or residences briefly to pave the driveway portions of the road, but Mr. Paramski said this would only last about 45 minutes.

Those in charge of the project at MDOT have taken note of weekend

**At left: Cones appeared along Business Loop I-75 Tuesday, July 7, when repaving work began along the main road into St. Ignace. The repaving project will run from near First Street on US-2 to High Street. Two lanes of traffic will be maintained for the majority of the work and a completion date is expected near the end of August, according to Michigan Department of Transportation.**

festivals and events in the city, like the Red Hacker Basketball Tournament and Fish Feast, and agreed to do no work on those days. Mr. Paramski also said he did not anticipate any night work, and construction crews would operate within the daytime hours of the city's noise ordinance.

Benefits listed by the state for repaving this section of St. Ignace's main street include improving safety and extending the life of the pavement.

"It's been on the state's list of future plans for over five years," Mr. Paramski said. The new curbs being installed near Aurora Borealis and Northern Lights will also promote safety by creating a barrier between street traffic and parking lots and driveways of the businesses, he said.

No detour will be part of this project, although an alternate route for Mackinac Straits Hospital will receive hospital "H" signs for about

a week, expected to begin the week of July 13, when crews will be blocking access to Burdette Street, the normal route to the hospital. This temporary route will begin on Ferry Lane off the business loop and continue down Elliot Street and onto Hombach Street, to the hospital.

Downtown Development Authority Director Deb Evashevski suggested during Wednesday's meeting that orange signs to be placed in the construction area by MDOT be changed from reading "Businesses Open" to read "All Businesses Open." MDOT officials

agreed and changed the order for the three commissioned signs. One of these signs will be placed near High Street facing southbound traffic, one will be near the I-75 bridge facing motorists traveling toward downtown St. Ignace, and one will be on the I-75 off-ramp for motorists who just crossed the Mackinac Bridge.

Paving will be done by Payne and Dolan, a paving contractor based in Waukesha, Wisconsin, with offices in Sault Ste. Marie. Subcontractors will be brought in to complete other elements of the project such as gutters, drainage, and curb repairs and installation.

## Michigan Politics

By  
George Weeks



## Seaway Opens Gates to Calamity

In Greek mythology, what became known as Pandora's Box was a large container that, when opened, unleashed many unintended ills upon mankind.

In "Pandora's Locks: The Opening of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway," a timely and provocative new book just published by Michigan State University Press, there is no myth, but sobering realities about the ills unleashed by ocean ships that entered the lakes through the Seaway that is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

Celebration? Author Jeff Alexander suggests there should be a wake because of the 57 destructive invasive species, some that have caused massive die-offs of birds and fish, brought in by ocean "salties" whose ballast discharges the U.S. government has failed to adequately regulate.

"For the lakes, the Seaway was the ecological equivalent of Pandora's Box," writes Alexander, an award-winning environmental journalist honored with a 2007 Notable Book citation from the Library of Michigan. "It released a tidal wave of unintended consequences, destructive changes that may never be reversed."

In fact, according to University of Notre Dame biology professor David M. Lodge in 2007 congressional testimony, "Biological invasions are the least reversible form of pollution. Chemical pollutants do not reproduce; species do."

In a recent interview with the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Alexander was asked what the "trigger" was that prompted him to research the book while on unpaid sabbatical from the *Muskegon Chronicle*.

He replied: "One of my favorite beaches is Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore near Traverse City, Michigan. On Labor Day in 2007, dead loons and other birds were scattered along the beach, dark green algae fouled the waters, and Chinook salmon were floating everywhere. Dead zebra mussels and quagga mussels were piled on the beach. Botulism caused by the invasive mussels and gobies killed the fish and birds."

Current reports of more die-offs underscore the point.

The stunner in Alexander's book is not so much his comprehensive account of damage done by inviting transoceanic freighters into our freshwater seas. It is accounting of "a decade of foot-dragging by the Coast Guard," and of reluctance of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to protect.

I'm a fan of the Coast Guard, once writing a book that had a chapter on "Heroes of the Storm," and, like Alexander, admire the remarkable job it does of saving lives and promoting safety on the Great Lakes. It plucks sailors from sinking ships and dangerous seas. Since its inception, it has saved the lives of more than one million people. It rescued more than 33,000 people after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2007, a rare federal success in that disaster.

But, alas, the Guard let its guard down big time on small foreign invaders.

Alexander writes that U.S. Representative Vern Ehlers (R-Grand Rapids), a physicist "who long has worked on the ballast water issue, said the blame for failing to solve the problem rested solely with the Coast Guard."

Ehlers told Alexander: "I personally think the Coast Guard really fell down on the job. Congress passed a law on invasive species in 1990 and the Coast Guard did nothing. Congress passed another law in 1996 and the Coast Guard did nothing. They really didn't want anything to do with it; they didn't see it as part of their mission. And they tended to side with the shipping industry."

Alexander cited numerous examples of the Coast Guard's chummy relations with the industry and "hands-off approach to regulating ballast water." He also criticized the EPA for resisting taking a protective role on the issue until so ordered by the courts.

A most telling comment comes from Eric Reeves, a retired Coast Guard commander who was its 1993-1998 manager of ballast water inspections. He said there was a time in the 1990s when "We would get together to talk to shipping officials about what the industry didn't like about our regulations and how we [the Coast Guard] were going to deal with it." He told Alexander: "It was like Dick Cheney discussing the nation's energy policy behind closed doors with oil tycoons."

Promotional blurbs on book covers often are mere PR fluff, but this from Reeves on Alexander's book is worthy of note:

"This is the definitive history of the subject. I fear that we have already lost our battle to protect the Great Lakes from invasive species, but I'll take solace from knowledge that Alexander's history of that lost battle gives us the opportunity to learn a few vital lessons from this tragedy of the commons."

It's a sad saga. The feds, after failing us, are stepping up to the plate. But this important book warns that the consequences may never be reversed.

Last week, Governor Jennifer Granholm, Senators Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow, U.S. Representative Bart Stupak, and 10 other officials did the shovel gig for groundbreaking in Sault Ste. Marie for a \$580 million project to build a new Soo Lock that will accommodate the largest ships on the Great Lakes.

The lock and big ore carriers are vital to the Michigan economy. The salties are important, but not as vital. Ban them if they can't come in clean.

The politicians who thrust their shovels into the ground at the Soo last week should read Alexander's book, as well as a June 25 Navigation and Invasive Species report from Great Lakes United on improving environmental stewardship.

In release of the report, Dennis Schornack, an ex-aide to then-Governor John Engler and former U.S. Chair of the International Joint Commission, said: "The damage invasive species have caused to the Great Lakes is astounding. But, what's most frustrating is that we still haven't closed the door."

George Weeks retired in 2006 after 22 years as political columnist for *The Detroit News*. His weekly *Michigan Politics* column is syndicated by *Superior Features*.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Why Is Bridge Authority Considering 24-hour Rule?

To the Editor:

The elimination of a Mackinac Bridge commuter discount would be fairer than imposing a 24-hour limit for travel to be eligible for the commuter discount. Why is it fair for daily travel to and from work or other purposes to qualify for the discount when less frequent travel for longer periods would not qualify, even if for exactly the same purposes?

A person who travels five or six days each week between Michigan's peninsulas for a day of work would qualify for the discount, but one who frequently travels weekly for two days of work would not. Regular travel between the peninsulas for medical care qualifies as commuter travel only if the care doesn't require any overnight stay (no care that involves appointments too early or too late in the day or more than one day).

In this area, the weather can cause a traveller to miss this 24-hour deadline. Winter driving can be too hazardous. One can fly to work on Mackinac Island when there is no ferry service and inclement weather can prevent a return in the 24-hour period.

Why is a 24-hour restriction to qualify for a commuter discount even under consideration? It appears to be nothing more than a step toward the elimination of the commuter discount.

Daniel Robbins  
Mackinaw City

### Essay Depicts Life in EUP

To the Editor:

The Rudyard Area Education Fund presented several thousand dollars in scholarships to graduating seniors at the RHS awards assembly May 14.

Among the recipients was the winner of an essay contest, Rhea Moses of Rudyard. Her entry, "Life in the Eastern Upper Peninsula," was written in response to a published work that focuses on the pleasures of living in the EUP.

In my judgment, Rhea's essay is worthy of publication. It resonates with anyone who is both proud and happy to be a resident of this part of Michigan. For the benefit of your many readers, please allow me to include a few passages from Rhea's composition:

"Some nights the quiet sounds of a country spring are beyond peaceful. A Michigan spring is a melody of nature, like the soft sounds of a world famous orchestra, floating through my bedroom window.

"My parents own a small farm where we have had the opportunity to raise horses, cows, rabbits, chickens, and a pig from time to time. Life on a farm may not be appealing to most kids, but I wouldn't trade the memories, the fun, or the knowledge I gained from working as a family unit.

"I have so many experiences and memories from my life here. Many of those come from the fun we had while camping out at Monocle Lake...making S'mores by the campfire while telling ghost stories, swimming and fishing. These are the stories and memories that will always stay with me, reminding me of home, family, and the privilege of where I grew up.

"Some might say we have fewer opportunities here, but I don't believe so. Our opportunities come in a different fashion. We may not have the fun amusement parks or big fine arts centers that are available in the bigger cities. However, what we do have are teachers that have time for one-on-one learning with their students, teachers who show how much they really care...We have churches that are the foundations of our community, where old and young are active together. I don't feel like I just live in Michigan. I feel like Michigan is a part of me. I love the quiet strength and beauty that have always supported my family..."

Rhea's words are an inspiration. Furthermore, I feel she speaks for the overwhelming majority of young people in our area. The values they have learned will guarantee them a bright future.

Larry Flanders  
RAEF Board Members  
Trout Lake

## St. Ignace News Policies

### Letters:

All responsible letters will be considered for publication and may be edited. They must be signed and a telephone number must be included for verification. Personal thank-you notes, personal attacks against other people, form letters, and letters promoting political candidates are not accepted, although letters for or against ballot proposals are welcome.

### Obituaries:

The St. Ignace News maintains a policy of not charging for obituaries and we do often add information or rewrite them for clarity and reader interest. Obituaries that the family wants published exactly as submitted can be placed in the newspaper for \$75. Photographs are welcome at no charge.

### Weddings:

Weddings with photographs are published without charge within 45 days of the ceremony. After 45 days, a photograph can be included for \$35.00.

### Internet:

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The quotation under the flag of *The St. Ignace News* on Page 1 is from the 10 triads written by Dr. Fred Newton Scott, creator and teacher of the first continuous course in journalism in the United States at the University of Michigan in 1890. The 10 triads are chiseled on the parapet of the Detroit News Building at 615 Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit. They were headed "Ideals of the Press" or "The Newspaper in a Free Society," and serve as a reminder of what a free press means to us.