News

Downtown work: A big improvement or a big pain?

BY MATT ROCHELEAU FOR THE SUN CHRONICLE Tuesday, June 24, 2008 3:14 AM EDT

ATTLEBORO - The city's streetscape project, including the construction of new sidewalks, curbs and the installation of historical light fixtures, has turned downtown upside down - and it's generating lots of opinions.

"I think it looks great. What they've done with the common area is phenomenal," Bob Bamberg, owner of Attleboro's Old Barn, said on one of his daily walks through downtown.

The streetscape improvements will cost about $1 million - mainly in state and federal funds - and stretch from the common to city hall on Park Street and the Bronson Building at the intersection of North and South Main streets.

"It's money well spent," Bamberg said, adding that when the project was first conceived, funding for priorities like police, fire and schools was not as tight as it is now.

At the Super Petroleum station on Pleasant Street, which overlooks much of the work, station worker Roger Winsor said, "anything to improve the city's look is good." And while the construction has caused some traffic headaches, Winsor said "it's nothing to complain about. It's understandable."

Bamberg had no complaints about traffic either.

"Traffic is traffic," he said. "It has always been tough navigating through downtown Attleboro."

Others disagreed.

"I don't think it's worth it," motorist Lisa Fulton of Attleboro while getting gas.

She said the city should use the taxpayers' money on more serious matters.

"It's just ridiculous," she said.

Fulton said she has been affected firsthand, since the public works department has been too invested in the streetscape and similar projects to help her with an easement problem near her home.

Mary Perry of Norfolk has been commuting to her job at Sturdy Memorial Hospital for the past 16 years, and said it has taken her longer to get to work and she has left home a few minutes earlier since construction began.

"It's a pain in the (butt)," pedestrian Amanda Simoneau of Attleboro said while pushing her son in a stroller down the sidewalk. Simoneau said she frequently walks downtown, and trying to maneuver around construction, closed sidewalks and crossing busy streets with a stroller can be difficult.

However, Simoneau, said she was looking past present inconveniences, and would take a wait-and-see approach.

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ucbruin wrote on Jun 24, 2008 2:46 PM:
" Harry-I too have often wondered why so many people walk on the side of the street when there is a sidewalk available to them. Like you I was taught to use the sidewalk. "

us1087 wrote on Jun 24, 2008 12:04 PM:
" Lipstick on a pig. Save the cash and put it towards tax relef. "

jose21 wrote on Jun 24, 2008 9:58 AM:
" My only complaint is the little island that's attached to the bridge in the center. You used to be able to get over to the left 2 lanes if you wanted to get over onto 123, rather than go straight onto 118.. now you can't merge until you're closer to the intersection, which causes a backup under the bridge.. "

ricknkim wrote on Jun 24, 2008 9:29 AM:
" I think it is a great project for the city - place was looking more and more like Lowell and Fall River prior to the updates/enhancements.

Of course the way the budget and economy is now, it is tough to digest at times but when it was conceived and begun, we weren't in the current state of problems. A good step forward for the city but a long way to go. "

yestostreetscape wrote on Jun 24, 2008 9:29 AM:
" I'm 100% for the streetscape project. It's absolutely necessary to improve the city and it's the only chance at getting new businesses downtown. I can't believe people are complaining about a little traffic!!! "

ads wrote on Jun 24, 2008 8:25 AM:
" I think the beautification of the downtown area is a plus for the whole city. Of course, I'd like to see as much funds as possible for our schools, our police and fire department. But these funds were available from state and federal funding for this project, and I'm glad they did it.
Improving the run down, dingy downtown area will do so much for the city. I'm sure more people will enjoy the area when it's done, use it more and the overall improvement will be uplifting to the whole community. "

Harry Hindsight wrote on Jun 24, 2008 7:23 AM:
" But will all this work keep people from walking and running in the street? The biggest thing, all this money to make sidewalks handicap accessable, and there are still powered wheelchairs in the street. I can see where there are not any sidewalks, but to drive down the street next to new sidewalks is just mind blowing. Maybe I am just too old, but we were taught to walk on the sidewalks becase the cars do not drive there and we would not get hit. Wouldn't that make them electric vehicles and thus need turn signals and such, also to be registered as road worthy vehicles?
There ought to be a law for that! "

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