



Cory Byknish/Herald

The construction markers that limit traffic on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard in Farrell to one direction will be removed Friday, when regular traffic patterns resume, ending a two-year widening project.

FARRELL

MLK Blvd project is finished early

Widened street to open Friday

By Joe Pinchot
Herald Staff Writer

PennDOT plans to reopen Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and its Farrell side streets to regular traffic Friday, the completion of a two-year project to widen the road from Council Avenue in Wheatland to Roemer Boulevard in Farrell.

"We are about a month ahead of schedule," said PennDOT Construction Project Engineer Reggie Jannetti.

General contractor Kirila Contractors of Brookfield will be finishing paving the side streets, installing new

decorative lighting and cleaning up this week, he said.

King - known as Broadway Avenue in Wheatland and Hermitage and South Dock Street in Sharon - has been largely relegated to one direction of traffic, forcing many motorists to detour around the work. The connecting street intersections have been closed.

The only notable hiccup during construction was the discovery of a lesser-quality subsurface than was expected, requiring workers to dig deeper and replace it with more rock than expected, Jannetti said. The \$8.5 million project otherwise "really went according to plan," he said.

The mild winter, which allowed Kirila to work through the season, was a big factor

in the early wrap-up, he said.

Kirila added more crews and worked longer hours in 2012 to get back on schedule after delays caused by the relocation of utilities, he said.

The project created a center left-turn lane, making three lanes of 12 feet in width roadway over the 1.2-mile stretch, he said. Workers also installed new lights, poured new and replacement sidewalks, better defined the road shoulders and planted street trees. The sidewalks and ramps are all compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Last year, the project focused on the segment from Council to Adams Street in Farrell, and from Adams to Roemer this year.

The project was designed to make the road safer, but

also to spur economic development in the mostly industrial corridor.

Jannetti thanked businesses and residents for their patience throughout the construction.

"There was a lot of coordination that went on," he said.

Motorists will get a reprieve from construction on the road for about a year and a half until work begins on widening the 1½-mile stretch from Roemer to Connelly Boulevard in Sharon, where PennDOT plans to install a roundabout.

Officials plan is to accept bids in December 2014 with work taking up 2015 and 2016.

"That's could change depending on the funding," Jannetti said.