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New Plans to Remedy Rough Ride on Route 33 and I-78

Nearly \$14 million in projects to repair three of the Lehigh Valley's busiest roads will begin this summer, thanks to savings on other projects in the region.

The rough rides along sections of Route 33, Interstate 78 and Easton's 13th Street interchange were slated for repairs beginning next year, but savings on projects in the current four-year, \$458 million Transportation Improvement Program will enable construction for those projects to begin soon.

"These are three projects we had on the radar," said Michael Rebert, PennDOT District 5-0 Executive. "Everything fell into place and we had some extra money in the fund."

The road construction wasn't expected to be done until at least 2019, but when the bids for several projects on the current four-year spending plan came in under budget, it freed up money that can be spent this summer, before the new 2019-2022 TIP goes into effect Oct. 1.

All three of the projects are along sections of roadway that have become pitted and uneven from wear and frequent patching.

The funding for projects added to the current TIP includes:

- \$5.6 million to resurface and repair a more than two-mile section of Route 33, between the Tatamy and Belfast interchanges. The project calls for milling, resurfacing and concrete patches. Construction is scheduled to be complete by October of 2019, according to plans laid out by the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study (LVTS).
- \$4.3 million to resurface rough areas of I-78, along 32 miles of highway from the Berks County border to the Delaware River Toll Bridge in Easton. It is expected to take until October of 2019 before all of the work is complete.
- \$3.9 million for pavement repairs, bridge work and improved traffic signals at the 13th Street interchange. Construction is expected to be completed by the end of the year. That interchange was slated for a \$50 million project to install a new design that would eliminate the need for dangerous left turns. However, a plan to prohibit left turns at that interchange has proven successful, and the larger project has been postponed.

"Some of these projects may not be done until next year, but construction will start this summer," said Michael S. Donchez, Senior Transportation Planner for the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, which manages the LVTS. "That gets them in the current TIP cycle."

The new TIP, to run from Oct. 1, 2018 to September 30, 2022, plans \$534 million in spending for more than 115 road, bridge, trail, rail and transit projects.