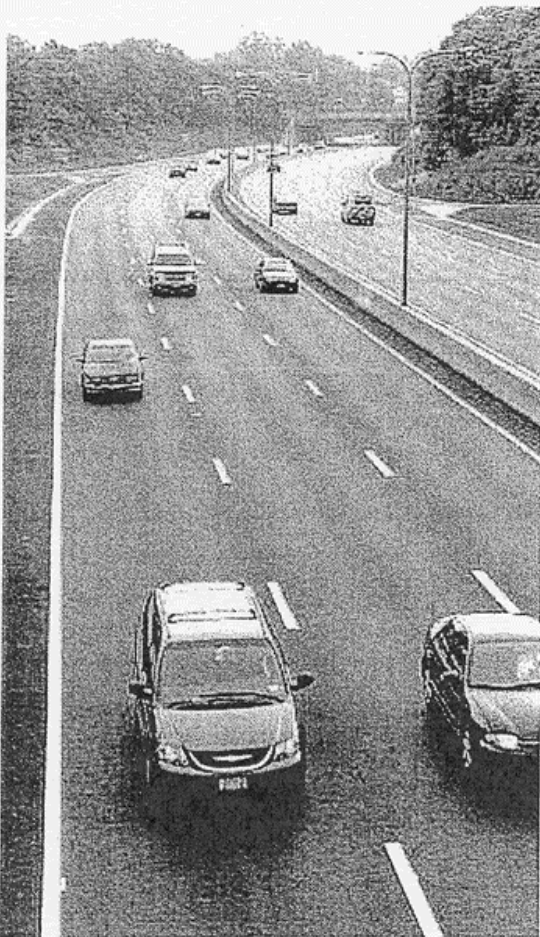


THE BUFFALO NEWS

Kensington? It's back on track

Traffic flowing freely as repaving finishes months ahead of time

By SHARON LINSTEDT
News Staff Reporter
7/21/2004



Ronald J. Collieran/Buffalo News It's clear sailing for motorists on the outbound lanes of the Kensington Expressway near Best Street after

Friday's completion of reconstruction work for the \$11.4 million project, whose contract deadline was Jan. 31, 2005.

Cars and trucks, rather than construction barriers and paving machines, are once again kings of Buffalo's Kensington Expressway.

The \$11.4 million, two-season effort to repave the Kensington from the Elm-Oak arterial to the Scajaquada Expressway has wrapped up months ahead of schedule, with only a handful of ancillary work still to be completed.

"The completion date in the contract is Jan. 31, 2005, and the main portion of the project was wrapped up on July 16," said Susan Surdej, spokeswoman for the state Department of Transportation's Buffalo office. "There were significant time savings because the contractor essentially worked double shifts, from 7 a.m. to midnight or 1 a.m., seven days a week."

Oakgrove Construction of Elma also kept commuter disruption to a minimum by confining paving operations to nights and weekends, completely closing sections of the outbound Kensington at off-peak periods to speed up the work.

"The contractor did an excellent job mitigating the impact on commuters. Projects of this scope are always going to cause some backups and delays, but Oakgrove did what it could to keep traffic moving during rush hour," Surdej said.

Unlike last season's work on the inbound portion of the major suburban-to-downtown connector, which did not get under way until June and was not completed until October, this season the crews got to work in March, paving the way for a July wrap-up.

Oakgrove, whose other recent local work includes the mainline Thruway "fifth lane" project and the current reconstruction of the Youngmann Highway, earned

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maximum contract bonuses for completing both the inbound and outbound portions of the project ahead of schedule.

While drivers now have clear sailing down the freshly repaved expressway, there will still be a few construction wrinkles as related work on ramps, landscaping and other odds and ends continues. For instance, the ramp from the Scajaquada Expressway to the outbound Kensington will be closed from 5 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, as well as the following Saturday.

Other minor projects include: installation of additional signs and pavement markings near the Goodell Street exit, reconstruction of concrete barrier transitions and shoulder sections adjacent to Humboldt Parkway and turning-radius improvements to the Jefferson Avenue access road.

Motorists will not see large-scale work on the Kensington again until 2010, when repaving efforts will pick up at the Scajaquada and continue east to Dick Road in Cheektowaga. Planning for that work is still in the preliminary stages, but it is expected to be a multiseason effort similar to the downtown segment.

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