

Palm Bay unveils \$4.3 million road maintenance program



Rick Neale, FLORIDA TODAY 3:28 p.m. EST January 20, 2016



(Photo: Malcolm Denmark, FLORIDA TODAY)

Next month, Palm Bay public works crews will start rolling out a new \$4.3 million wave of road repairs and construction at an array of deteriorating, pothole-pocked streets across the city.

"People are going to start seeing signs going up. We have my sign shop making signs that show 'road program in progress,'" said Barney Weiss, acting public works director.

"I think that's really going to help get the excitement and the energy from the community on the program. It's just one more extra step of, 'Hey, here's where those dollars are going. You're going to see things in your neighborhood.' And I think that's what's going to bring a real positive spin onto it," Weiss said.

According to outdated estimates, Palm Bay has a \$162 million road-repair backlog across 524 miles of deteriorating streets — especially in the city's northwestern and southern neighborhoods. Road maintenance woes largely date to General Development Corp.'s 1990 bankruptcy filing.



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The five costliest projects:

- **Robert J. Conlan Boulevard** (1.7 miles from U.S. 1 to Palm Bay Road) — \$1.1 million for reconstruction
- **St. Andre Boulevard** (1.4 miles from San Filippo Drive to Madden Avenue) — \$1 million for full construction
- **Culver Drive** (0.5 miles from Palm Bay Road to Emerson Drive) — \$493,000 for reconstruction
- **Lipscomb Street** (0.5 miles from Palm Bay Road to Tarpon Way) — \$279,000 for reconstruction
- **Malabar Road-Jupiter Boulevard intersection** — \$229,000 for reconstruction

Starting in February, Pavement Technology, a city-hired contractor, will start "rejuvenating" aging streets by applying a pavement-preserving sealant atop the asphalt. This technique is used in Cocoa Beach, and Palm Bay public works employees observed the process during a November tour of the beachside city.



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"You're retarding the aging process of the pavement. Let's say we pave the road, and about four or five years in we go back and rejuvenate it, which is putting back in the materials that have been lost during installation and after being exposed to the environment: the sun, the rain," said Camille Gordon-Taylor, operations division manager.

"So it's actually like putting lotion on dry skin. Think of it that way," Gordon-Taylor said.

John and Mary Chartrand live on Gantry Street Southwest, a short residential street off J.A. Bombardier Boulevard just northwest of Bayside High. During the Jan. 7 Palm Bay City Council meeting, John celebrated his 75th birthday by carrying a plastic bag to the public-comment

podium, reaching inside and producing a broken chunk of asphalt bigger than his fist that was hurled into his yard by passing traffic.

"This is what they're putting down on the road, and it hardens and creates crevices that weren't there to start with," Mary Chartrand told council members. "And yet they're short of filling in deep holes — one of which I fell into.

"It's sad that you can't get to your own mailbox without the threat of falling in a hole. From the city of Palm Bay, I expect better," she said.

John Chartrand threatened to contact an attorney: "If these roads are not fixed to where they're safe — and to where a 72-year-old woman doesn't have to fall and get marked on her back and on the back of her head — then something's going to be done."

Councilman Tres Holton replied that the Chartrands pay about \$270 per year in city taxes, or \$22 per month. He estimated it would cost \$20,000 to \$30,000 to repave Gantry Street Southwest, but there are only six houses on the half-mile road.

"If each of them got together, it would cost them \$3,333 a house to fix their road. These are facts. They're difficult. We're passionate. I want the public to know that we're not ignoring you. We know how much you're paying to fix the alignment of your car," Holton said.

"But the fact of the matter is, \$270 a year is not going to get your road paved. We're going to have to look seriously, long-term, on how we're going to get our roads paved in this community. And it's certainly not going to be strictly through ad valorem," he said.

In early December, Palm Bay administrators traveled to Hillsborough County to study road-repair equipment and a pavement-management database system.

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February/March road projects

During these months, rejuvenation and reconstruction starts on portions of Firwood Avenue, Crescent Street-Dagget Avenue-Fortune Avenue, Cogan Drive, Clearmont Street, Troutman Boulevard, Emerson Drive, Brickell Street, Wyoming Drive, Sarasota Drive and Lowry Boulevard

Source: Palm Bay Public Works

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