

Monaca gets \$3 million grant for streetscape project

By Jared Stonesifer

Posted Jun 30, 2018 at 12:01 AM

Updated Jul 2, 2018 at 9:43 AM

MONACA — The borough has received a \$3 million state grant to help pay for improvements to a 6,000-foot stretch of Pennsylvania Avenue.

The grant is significant not only in monetary terms, said Borough Manager Mario Leone, but it's also important because it's the first investment into the Monaca Gateway Project.

That project calls for upgrades to Pennsylvania Avenue between Fourth Street and 17th Street, as well as a traffic roundabout at the intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and 17th Street. The project would also include sidewalk and drainage improvements and intersection improvements on the heavily traveled corridor.

Leone previously said the entire project could cost upward of \$26 million.

Monaca officials for more than a year have been applying for state and federal grants. Leone and other local officials traveled to Washington, D.C., in March to advocate for a \$6 million federal grant.

Leone said Friday that Monaca was not successful in securing that grant, which made it even sweeter when the state funding was recently awarded through the Department of Community and Economic Development.

The \$3 million grant is a significant investment into the project, Leone said, but it could also result in momentum for other agencies to invest into the project.

"The project is no longer a picture on a piece of paper," he said. "We can make it come to life."

Leone said he isn't sure of the next steps for the grant, such as when the money will be delivered or when the first part of the Monaca Gateway Project can be put out to bid.

He did say, however, that Dennis Davin, secretary of the state DCED, will come to Monaca next month to further discuss the project.

In a news release announcing the grant, state Rep. Rob Matzie, D-16, Ambridge, said he helped set up a meeting between Monaca officials and DCED officials in May. During that meeting, the Monaca officials got the chance to pitch their vision for the project, and the secretary clearly bought in.

"This is a prime example of how state and local government can work together to better our community," Matzie said. "The community presented me with their vision, which I shared with the secretary. He expressed his interest, so I set up a meeting in May. The borough formally presented the plan, the secretary endorsed it and it was launched."

He also called it a "huge win" for Monaca and Beaver County.

In the same news release, the president of Monaca Council said the grant could go a long way in urging others to make similar investments.

"This is the commitment we have been waiting for to spur an uptick in grant funding that we need to see this project through for both economic growth and a more efficient corridor for the traffic that it will bring," John Booher said.

While the entire Monaca Gateway Project calls for upgrades to a long stretch of Pennsylvania Avenue, Leone on Friday said he is "aggressively pushing" a streetscape enhancement between 10th and 13th streets for the first phase of the project.