

## WCHS Radio 580AM

### DOH Officials Present Plans for Dick Henderson Bridge

Officials with the West Virginia Division of Highways met with city leaders and residents in Nitro Thursday to discuss plans for the Dick Henderson Bridge, which connects Nitro to St. Albans

DOH engineer Dirar Ahmad told those in attendance at the meeting that the current bridge will be repaired.

Preliminary studies indicate the bridge will cost between \$30 - \$35 million, with 80 percent of that coming from the federal government and 20 percent from the state.

Ahmad says that funding has already been secured.

But he says there are still several steps until construction begins.

"The current schedule is we're hoping to start acquiring rights of ways sometime in the summer of 2011, assuming all the environmental issues are resolved, and then hoping to go to construction sometime in the fall of 2011," Ahmad said.

Nitro Mayor Rusty Casto says the project is necessary.

"We've got to get with it and get it done," Casto said. "It's just something we're going to have to bite the bullet. The bridge will be closed for most of 2012, and we're just going to have to get ready for it and do it."

Some citizens have expressed concern that the bridge could be closed for about 10 months.

Casto says there's no way around it.

"It's a necessary evil. We're just going to have to do it," Casto said.

Ahmad says the current plan is to more than double the width of the bridge.

That means the two-lane road could become a three or four-lane bridge.

Ahmad says before any plans are set in stone, the state will hold a series of public meetings.

"We have to get the public input, as we are designing," Ahmad said. "That will happen at the beginning of (2011)."

Because initial plans include widening the bridge, some residents have asked whether the government will have to take any homes.

Ahmad says it's too early to know for sure, but that isn't included in the plans right now.

Officials also showed residents a plan that would include building a brand new bridge.

Ahmad says that is a long-term project with no immediate plans.

Casto says repairing the current bridge is good for now.

"We'll have a bridge that will at least serve us as long as we live," Casto said. "Now, our grand kids might have to build a new one, but we won't have to worry about it."

DOH engineers met with the St. Albans transportation committee earlier this month to discuss the bridge.