

It is done! The overpass on Hallett Avenue officially opened to motorized traffic at 3:00 PM Friday, Nov. 2. This completion with all connecting streets is ahead of schedule due to the ideal working conditions of the past year. The Ohio Dept. of Transportation hosted a ceremony and ribbon cutting at 11:00 AM on Friday. Our village councilpersons, ODOT officials, Swanton Fire and Police units, and some county officials were in attendance along with the Swanton High School Marching Band who provided music for the occasion. It was a proper and fitting tribute to the numerous people who worked diligently to make this a reality for Swanton.

A project of this magnitude requires the expertise of many professionals. A few of those were our Village Administrator, Jon Gochenour, who has been working on this project for the last eight years. Jon secured the federal grant for 90% of the funding which is no easy task. Also, the engineers from Jones & Henry, engineers from ODOT, Miller Brothers Contracting, Lucas County officials and the Village of Swanton officials worked tirelessly throughout the project to ensure its completion.

Jon shared a history and some facts about the project at the ceremony. The Hallett Avenue Overpass is the largest and most expensive construction project in the 129 year history of the Village of Swanton. This project began as part of the State of Ohio's Railroad Grade Separation Program. A study was completed of 20 of the most dangerous railroad crossings in Northwest Ohio. Out of the 20 sites examined, the crossing at Hallett Avenue ranked second. In 2004, the project started with numerous public meetings where the community was asked to consider several proposed overpass designs. The selection of the final design was followed by three years of engineering work, road right-of-way acquisition, and overhead utility relocations.

In 2008, work on the project stopped. Funding committed by the federal government to proceed with construction was cut from a multi-year federal highway bill. In 2009, the federal stimulus program was enacted and the Village submitted this project for new stimulus funding. Out of the 10 projects considered for funding, the Hallett Avenue Overpass project was the smallest, the least expensive, and the last project listed on the meeting agenda of the Ohio Transportation Review Advisory Council. It was up against much larger projects such as three I-75 interstate projects and a new railroad transportation hub in Wood County. However, it was approved and the Village of Swanton received 7.9 million dollars in stimulus money. The approval was due to the fact that it was the most prepared project, a truly "shovel ready" one.

The overpass was specifically designed to improve access for businesses located along the railroad tracks. Additionally, residents and commuters will be able to get to work and school more easily, and our Fire and EMS personnel will no longer be delayed responding to calls. Its value is immense.

In other news, The Swanton Rotary Club will be celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Saturday evening, November 10, with their annual dinner and auction at Valleywood Golf Club. This is their main fundraiser of each year and all proceeds from the evening will benefit local community projects and scholarships. Raffle tickets are three for ten dollars and are available from any Rotary member. First prize is \$1000.00, second prize is a flat screen TV, and third prize is an iPod. You need not be present to win. Contact any Swanton Rotary member to purchase a ticket.