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Engineer says recount might convince DOT to reduce roadway width

An engineer has told Town of Fredonia officials that a revised traffic count might be enough evidence to convince the state Department of Transportation that a less costly design might be sufficient for the planned reconstruction of Jay Road.

This summer, consulting engineer Rick Schmidt of the engineering firm Stantec told town officials reconstructing the road west of Highway 57 would cost as much as $490,000.

That projection was $200,000 more than the firm originally estimated for the repaving work. Schmidt said the firm under-estimated blacktop costs by $190,000.

Based on that initial estimate, the town applied for — and received a $140,000 matching grant from the state's Town Road Discretionary Improvement Program.

After the engineering firm reported it had grossly underestimated the cost of the project, town officials have been trying to find a way to retain the grant money while bringing the reconstruction costs down.

Based on traffic counts, the DOT approved plans for replacing the 22-foot-wide Jay Road with a 30-foot-wide profile.

Schmidt said he is hopeful the state will approve a 26-foot-wide road profile without gravel shoulders, if the firm can provide new traffic counts that show the wider road is not needed.

He said the original counts were made when there was considerable construction in the area, resulting in higher-than-normal truck usage on Jay Road.

"Hopefully, within a few weeks we will have updated counts. The threshold number is 750 vehicles a day when 30-foot roadways are required," Schmidt said.

As an alternative design, Stantec is suggesting the rebuilt road have two 12-foot traffic lanes with two-foot gravel shoulders.

Schmidt said a wider road width might be justified near the Highway 57 intersection, which handles considerable traffic generated by the adjacent Cedar Valley Cheese Factory.