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# Troy follows opening of Route 162 with store groundbreaking

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Even standing out in the cold with a shovel wasn't enough to wipe the grin off Troy Mayor Tom Caraker's face Monday.

On Friday afternoon, after years of planning and delays in construction, city and state officials gathered at City Hall for a press conference to officially mark the opening of Troy's main highway — Illinois Route 162. That ceremony was followed up on Monday morning with a groundbreaking for the city's new Walgreens store, a project that was also placed on the back burner for several months.

"It's been a hell of a lot of fun," joked Caraker, as he stepped behind the podium on Friday. "This is not the end of the job, as far as I'm concerned. This is only the beginning."

The mayor recalled laying out plans more than a decade ago for upgrading the transportation aspects of Troy, with Route 162 being the "biggest piece of the puzzle" in preparing the city for future commercial development.

Engineering studies show that the highway currently carries over 25,000 vehicles per day. That number is expected to jump to over 37,000 by the year 2024.

City officials ran into several snags right from the beginning of the Route 162 project, as they attempted to secure close to \$31 million for widening and resurfacing nearly 3.6 miles of the highway and to construct a new bridge and interchange



MIKE TERRY PHOTO

With Illinois Route 162 now fully open to traffic, Koman Properties Inc. hosted a groundbreaking for its upcoming Walgreens store on Monday morning. The new location is slated to open this July.

es remain, including striping, which they expected to be finished in the spring.

"I want to thank the residents of Troy for their patience," said state Rep. Jay C. Hoffman, who attended Friday's opening ceremony. "I know this is going to serve the city well."

Hoffman (D-Collinsville) also promised that lawmakers would make the new Route 162 bridge and interchange a top priority when handing out dollars for upcoming road construction projects.

Estimated to cost between \$23 and \$26 million, Caraker believes the project will likely get funding

"build it and they are here."

The Walgreens store will be located off Route 162, between Troy Boulevard and Dorothy Drive, and will be the same size as ones recently built in Collinsville and Maryville. Terry Barnes, senior vice president for developer Koman Properties Inc., said it would open sometime in July.

A total of nine lots also sit alongside where the Walgreens store will soon rise. They are expected to be the future home of several other commercial businesses, known as the Dorothy Drive Business District.