

# Ray's changing landscape

*Ray Underpass dedicated*

Ray residents saw the last car going through the underpass last Friday.

The underpass of Ray is almost fully consumed with backfill and will no longer be known as the underpass but the overpass of Ray. Silas Harris III, the Superintendent of Industrial Builders Inc., said in April that the first step in constructing the overpass is to fill in the underpass. There are about six feet left to be filled.

"Burlington Northern/Santa Fe will then come in and complete the backfilling starting July 1, according to contract," said Harris. "Burlington Northern/Santa Fe has from July 1 to July 31 to complete the backfill."

Harris said that backfill needs to be packed down to a certain percentage. It needs to be 85 percent to perfection. Right now it is running at 95 to 97 percent perfection.

The landscape is slowly taking shape as Gratech, a subcontractor from Berthold, is adding more backfill to the surrounding area.

"Construction of the east side embankment (backfill) is on schedule," Harris said. "Construction of the new piers has also begun. The first phase is driving in h-piles."

With the backfill taking place to create the slope, the underground utilities are having to be diverted and in some places extended.

This week the construction crews will work with the underground utilities on the west side of the existing underpass. Harris said that Netcon, a subcontractor from Williston, is now diverting the storm sewer pipes, sanitary pipes and the water lines. There will be an incline of thirty feet of dirt created which will make access to the existing

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--Silas Harris III,  
Superintendent of Industrial Builders, Inc.

pipes impossible due to the amount of backfill on top of the pipes.

"The work on the underground utilities will take about three weeks to a month to complete," Harris said.

By July 1998, when the \$3.67 million overpass project is expected to be complete, travelers on U.S. 2 will pass over the railroad tracks on a new bridge rather than under the tracks as in the past.

The existing underpass will be replaced with two bridges. The first bridge will be located just north of the existing structure on the east edge of Ray, by the Blue Mill Motel. The incline will rise approximately 25 feet above the existing railroad tracks.

As can already be seen, access to Main Street of Ray no longer exists. Now there are barricades but soon there will be a retaining wall that will permanently block off access from U.S. 2. At its peak the wall will be 28 feet high and will descend to two feet from the ground.

The second bridge will be found in the same location as the underpass and is to be completed by July 31, 1998.



**GONE FOREVER . . .** The underpass built in 1940 was used for the last time Friday. Pictured are E Simpson, passenger in the front seat. Norman was involved in the construction of the underpass in 1940. Mayor Wayne Viall, Natasha Simpson, and Ray City Auditor Dick Ross.

# Ray overpass taking shape

By Kim Koropatnicki

Day by day the Ray overpass grows.

The east approach embankment now rises 15 to 20 feet above the elevation of the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe Railroad tracks, which are no longer in view because of the slope of the new overpass being built on U.S. 2.

Silas Harris III, project superintendent for the contractor, Industrial Builders, said Ray area residents will notice another change during the next two to three weeks. There will be a large increase in truck traffic as crews haul gravel from a pit to the construction site.

Harris said work on the north and south retaining walls will be ongoing this week, and Netcon Services, Inc. will be finishing the sanitary sewer system and moving on to installing the new water and storm sewer systems.

Meanwhile, Ray area residents at a weekly meeting at city hall May 29 expressed concern about traffic problems created by the detour on 4th Avenue.

A resident was concerned about the detour near Fourth Avenue where the vehicles are speeding as if on a highway instead of city streets and traveling on the wrong side of the street.

"An accident will happen if people aren't careful where and how they're

driving," said Ray resident JoAnn Engel. "Can't someone do something about this?"

Engel went on to say vehicles were speeding about 20 miles over the speed limit on the old truck route road which has a speed limit of 20.

Engel expressed concern about the safety of children playing in the area as well as all of the extra dust that the short cut causes.

Williston Assistant District Engineer Jim Redding said he would have Industrial Builders put posts across the short cut so people won't be tempted to cross at that point.

The \$3.67 million overpass, to be completed by July 1998, is taking the place of an underpass that was backfilled with dirt and will eventually be replaced by two bridges going over the railroad tracks.

The first bridge will be available to travellers by Nov. 1, according to contract.

The second bridge will be found in the same location as the underpass and is to be completed by July 31, 1998.

Community members who have questions or comments during the construction are invited to meet with Harris during his weekly sessions at 2 p.m. on Thursdays at city hall. He will provide a two-week work schedule at each meeting.

# Ray overpass scheduled to open

## Replacement for old underpass on Highway 2 right on schedule

By **ELOISE OGDEN**  
Regional Editor

RAY — Two lanes of the \$3.7 million four-lane overpass on U.S. Highway 2 at Ray are scheduled to open for traffic at noon today.

"It's right on schedule," said Jim Redding, assistant engineer for the state Department of Transportation's Williston District.

The all-cement overpass on the east side of Ray is a two-bridge structure. Each bridge has two lanes, but the second one won't be done until June, Redding said.

The overpass is replacing an old and deteriorating underpass, Redding said. "I'm not sure how old it was, but some of the walls started to collapse."

Contractor Industrial Builders of Fargo began work on the bridge April 17, Redding said.

Another big bridge project in northwest North Dakota is the construction of a new

bridge to cross the Yellowstone River on N.D. Highway 200, three miles east of East Fairview, near the North Dakota-Montana border.

### New contractor

The transportation department hired a new contractor, Sletten Construction of Great Falls, Mont., this fall after firing the original contractor, Morgan and Oswood, also of Great Falls, for cost overruns.

The transportation department is building the new bridge over the Yellowstone because of the old bridge's narrow width — it's 22 feet wide. The bridge also has structural problems. Some time ago, a big chunk of concrete fell out of the roadway of the bridge, leaving a gaping hole. DOT fixed the 6-to-8-foot-wide cavity but decided to build the new bridge.

Redding said the target date to finish the new bridge over the Yellowstone is September 1999.



Photo by Roger Riveland for the Daily News

**FINISHING TOUCHES** — Workers from Industrial Builders of Fargo put the finishing touches on the new overpass at Ray on Thursday. Two lanes of the overpass will open today. The other two lanes will be finished by June 1998. The total overpass project cost \$3.7 million.

# Ray overpass open for traffic

By Kim Koropatnicki

Seven months ago a little yellow Volkswagon Bug made the final trip through a deteriorating underpass.

Saturday, it made a celebrated trip across a newly-constructed overpass that has replaced the 1940 vintage underpass.

At noon two of the four lanes on the new \$3.67 million overpass on U.S. 2 in Ray were opened for traffic, eliminating the months long detour around the city.

"The first overpass bridge was due to be completed by Nov. 1 and we opened it right on schedule," said Silas Harris III, project manager for Industrial Builders Inc. of Fargo.

"Everything is done but the bridge deck on the second bridge. We have until July 31 to finish the project. We will complete the overpass on schedule."

Harris said the crews will work another month to get things cleaned up.

"The community is glad to see traffic coming through Ray instead of around the town," said City Auditor Dick Ross. "It really helps

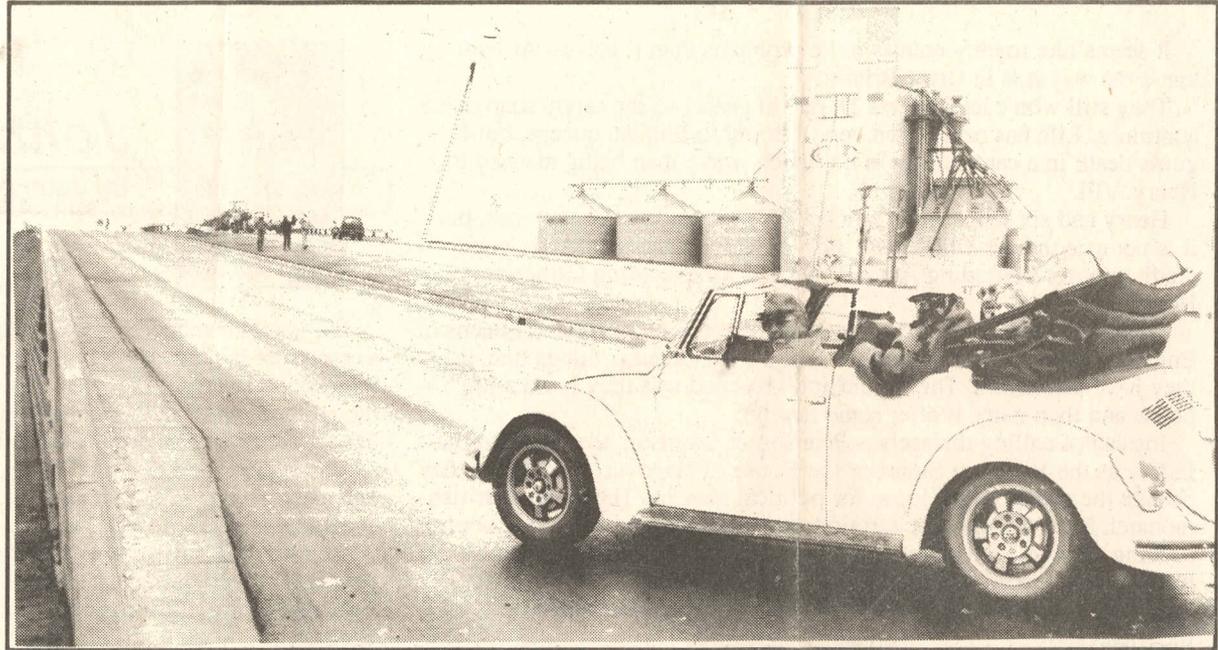
the economy having a project like this."

"Silas Harris, Industrial Builders, subcontractors and the N.D. Department of Transportation did a really good job in cooperating with the community," Ross said.

Many Ray residents said it's good to see the overpass is open and are happy with it.

The overpass project began in April. The first order of business was to eliminate the deteriorating underpass and fill it with dirt. Now it has been replaced by two bridges over the Burlington/Northern Santa Fe Railroad tracks.

The completed bridge, just north of the old underpass on the east edge of Ray near the Blue Mill Motel, rises some 25 feet above the BNSF tracks. The second bridge is found in the same location as the deteriorated underpass and has an eight foot wide sidewalk/pedestrian walkway, making it larger than the north bridge. The walkway will be totally encased with a chainlink fence by July 1998.



**NEW BEGINNINGS** . . . First vehicle to go over Ray's newly constructed overpass on Saturday were Bill Simpson, driving; Norman Simpson, passenger in the front seat. In the back seat are (r to l) Ray Mayor Wayne Viall, Natasha Simpson, and Ray City Auditor, Dick Ross.

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