

# Oscaleta Road reopens after emergency culvert replacement

*Thane Grauel*



## **STAFF REPORTS**

Emergency repairs to the culvert under Oscaleta Road in South Salem progressed this week, with a temporary span opened to traffic and pedestrians on Thursday.

Earlier in the week, highway workers had said it could be a week or two before the road was opened.

The March 15 collapse of the road, which already had been reduced to one lane because of its deteriorating condition, has limited access to several neighborhoods. Oscaleta Road has been closed to all vehicular and pedestrian traffic between Twin Lakes Road and South Shore Drive. The span had allowed water to flow between Lake Waccabuc and Lake Oscaleta under the road.

Last week, town highway crews began clearing the debris, including broken pavement, from the area. By this Wednesday, emergency repairs were well under way, with three large pipes being set in place and covered over. Paving and other work remained to be done.



Work crew covering newly installed pipes beneath Oscaleta Road on Wednesday. THANE GRAUEL PHOTO

A permanent fix was already in the works before the complete collapse of the culvert.

Highway Superintendent John Winter told the Town Board on Monday the span was scheduled to be replaced with funding through a portion of a Bridge NY Grant from the New York State Department of Transportation.

“The process is still in an engineering design phase,” he said, adding it is expected to go out to bid in 2027.

On March 17, he said, all the blacktop and dirt were removed from the top of the collapsed culvert to reestablish the flow between the two waterways. On March 18, he submitted an emergency authorization request to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, which was approved that day.

Winter said he had ordered about \$15,000 worth of 40-inch pipe for the temporary culvert. Most of the work, he said, is being done by town employees, but local contractors were needed for large trucks.

Winter said the plan is to reopen the road with one alternating lane for vehicles.

“We as a town need to get this road reopened,” Winter told the board.

Deputy Supervisor Mary Shah said at the Town Board meeting she was going to meet with officials from Westchester County Emergency Management to find out if the town could apply for federal funds to deal with the culvert collapse.

“Thus far, the DOT has been very responsive,” Mark Lukasik, senior vice president of Tectonic Engineering, said at the board meeting.

He said another meeting with the DOT was scheduled this week, with a focus on wrapping up the environmental review.

On Monday morning, Town Supervisor Tony Gonçalves sent out an email update, detailing what was being done. He said Tectonic Engineering, the firm handling the long-term replacement of the culvert, county legislators and state legislators were contacted. A Zoom meeting with officials and the DOT also was held.

“The goal was to schedule a discussion to review the options available to us to restore the culvert & road whether it would be a temporary/emergency repair while also to fasttrack the culvert replacement project which is currently in the design phase as a result of the NYS DOT BridgeNY grant awarded to the Town of Lewisboro for the culvert replacement,” he wrote.

“Three pipes have been laid in the collapsed culvert, and the Lewisboro Maintenance Department is in the process of filling in the culvert to allow paving of the road,” Stephen Heyman, who lives in the neighborhood, said in an email Wednesday. “This will open it to vehicular passage!!! They expect that we will be able to drive through in less than a week. The Town of Lewisboro and all involved have done heroic work on our behalf. Congratulations and thank you very much to all involved!”

A public meeting on the culvert replacement project was planned Thursday night, after press time.

— Neal Rentz, Jeff Morris and Thane Grauel contributed to this report.