

Overpass construction at 239th St. grinds on

By Joshua Payne

The refurbishing of the West 239th Street overpass above the Henry Hudson Parkway should be completed by September, according to a spokesman from the city Department of Transportation.

The bridge, just west of the Monument, has been undergoing renovation since April 2005 and the work has crawled along at times due to the complexity of the project.

So far, the sidewalk on each side of the bridge has been demolished and rebuilt, a new support structure has been installed and waterproofed under the roadway and the arch reinforced on the bridge's underside.

Street lighting and work on the traffic signals near the bridge is ongoing, and a DOT spokesman said the department aims to finish those tasks this month.

Still on the agenda in the coming weeks is the placement of permanent asphalt on the roadway approaching the bridge from the east and west, tentatively scheduled to begin the week of June 26.

Currently, flat rectangular metal plates are sunk into the asphalt leading up to the bridge on the western side just in front of the Jewish Board of Family Service's Beatman Center. The road on the bridge's eastern side is still rough and features a patchwork of uneven paving. But the concrete triangle that helps guide cars around the Monument on that side of the bridge is finished.

The prolonged renovation of the West 239th Street bridge — a main pedestrian artery connecting Riverdalians who live west of the parkway to the shops on Johnson Avenue — has been a source of particular annoyance to residents. Frustration peaked earlier this year when the sidewalks were under repair and pedestrians were forced to walk in the street, causing traffic jams and creating a potentially dangerous situation.

Riverdalian Robert Press spoke repeatedly about the problem at Community Board 8 meetings and in an e-mail to *The Press* last week Jim Grossman, who lives in the Fieldston Garden apartments on West 238th Street just south of the bridge, wrote, "The job is incomplete and the area is a total mess."

When the work is complete, new steel-backed timber guide rails will be installed along each curb line replacing the orange-striped Jersey barriers that now protect pedestrians.

A new, black metal picket fence will sit atop the bridge's parapet walls.

THE RIVERDALE PRESS — Thursday, June 1, 2006