Streets project viewed as boost for downtown

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Staff Writer

A multimillion-dollar proposal to reconstruct Main and St. Joseph streets in the heart of Rapid City is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to improve the downtown, city officials said.

“This is going to be something that’s going to last for 50 to 75 years,” city Public Works Director Mike Strub said. “Whatever we do down there in the next four years will be something that’s going to be there for the next 50 years. Whatever it does, it’s going to have a significant impact in downtown for a lot of years to come.”

Strub said the reconstruction, a large part of which would be paid by the state, would result from a proposed agreement between the city of Rapid City and the state.

Under the proposal, the city would take over maintenance of about 9½ miles of city streets which presently are maintained by the state. Those 9½ miles include Main and St. Joseph streets between East and West boulevards, and part of East Boulevard.

“We already plow the snow on them,” Strub said. “This would mean we would take over the crack patching and the painting and so forth.”

If the agreement becomes final, the state would first pay to rebuild the streets from the ground up. Old pavement would be ripped out and all utilities would be replaced before the streets were reconstructed, Strub said.

The cost of replacing water and sewer lines would be born by the city. Replacing private utilities would be paid for by the companies that owned the utilities, he said.

Jim Jenssén, director of planning for state Department of Transportation, said “if funding stays stable,” plans are to begin reconstruction of Main Street in 1991 and of St. Joseph Street in 1992.

Early cost estimates were put at nearly $5 million, he said.

The proposed project is “a once-in-a-lifetime chance to define the personality of downtown Rapid City,” said Bryan Schnell, director of the Downtown Redevelopment Corp.

Schnell said the downtown group had been monitoring progress on the proposed agreement for the last year and a half. The group hopes to be have its board members involved “to take the concerns of the downtown people” to those who will plan the project, he said.

“We will work very hard to see that the construction disruption, which will be considerable, will be kept to a minimum,” he said.

Strub said the project could take three or four years to complete.

The proposed agreement will go before the Rapid City Common Council at the council’s next Public Works Committee meeting, he said.