

TODAY'S PROBLEM

In deep water • Drainage woes flood Broadway

A stretch of Broadway in St. Louis is awash with sewer problems, and it's causing serious flooding just about every time it rains.

During a rainstorm Wednesday evening, the corner of Broadway and Meramec Street was submerged in standing water, making much of the intersection unsafe to drive in or walk across. In some places, the water was more than a foot deep.

Traffic backed up on Broadway, and motorists on Meramec tried to avoid the street pond by driving on the left side of the street. Pedestrians hurrying to a bus stop had no choice but to hike up their pants and slosh on through.

There's nothing new about the flooding. In fact, the Metropolitan Sewer District has been hearing complaints about the problem for more than a year, said spokeswoman Debbie Johnson.

There are actually a few problems going on there, Johnson said. One of them already has been fixed, but the more serious repairs won't happen until some time next year.

After I asked MSD about the problem, sewer workers cleaned a clogged inlet at Broadway and Gasconade Street, one block north of the worst flooding. That should help, but only a little.

The biggest problem at Broadway and Meramec is part of a different sewer line, and one in bad need of replacement. For more than a year, MSD has been designing an overhaul under the corner that would replace three different pipes at the site.

Johnson said that because of the presence of some Laclede Gas lines at the corner, the job requires careful planning. She said that design work should wrap up in a few months and that construction could start some time next year, but it was too early to know how long the work would last or how much it would cost.

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE

Brian Hoelscher • Director of Engineering for the Metropolitan Sewer District • 768-6200 • bhoel@stlmsd.com



Standing water stretches more than 100 feet along Broadway at Meramec Street during Wednesday night's storm. Traffic backed up, and pedestrians trying to cross the street got soaked in water that, in places, was more than a foot deep. The Metropolitan Sewer District says that it is working on the problem but that it won't be fixed until next year. Matthew Hathaway

WHAT'S BEEN FIXED

MetroLink escalator is working again

An escalator that I first wrote about on April 29 was fixed Tuesday afternoon, after being broken for about eight months. This was an especially embarrassing problem, as it was at the Convention Center MetroLink station — the one used heavily by out-of-towners and by those meeting planners trying to decide if St. Louis is worthy of a big convention.

There are stairs at the station but going down those can be difficult if you're a conventioner with lug-

gage in tow. The station's elevator was working, too, but as at other stations, the elevators at this stop are frequently used as toilets and smell accordingly.

A Metro official said early last month that repairing the escalator should cost about \$91,000.

WHO GOT IT FIXED

Larry Salci • Metro's president and chief executive

City puts steel covers over holes in park

Last week, I wrote about two large holes in Compton Heights Reservoir Park that were covered

— strangely and not very securely — with two upside-down traffic barrels. I thought the holes were storm water drains, but it turns out they are the ruins of an old street light junction box. Each hole is about two feet square and a few feet deep; at the bottom were leaves and garbage and a few inches of stagnant water.

Steel covers on the holes were repeatedly stolen by scrap metal thieves, and concrete ones broke under the weight of lawn mowers. So the city turned to barrels, jamming them into the holes like the corks of half-empty wine bottles.

New metal covers were installed last week, and this time the city welded them into place.



WHO GOT IT FIXED

Gary Bess • St. Louis' director of parks, recreation and forestry

Trench near path to school is filled

University City recently filled in a 25-foot-long trench that had been a danger to children on their way to school.

I wrote about the problem on May 20. The trench was more than a foot wide and, in places, about 2½ feet deep. Because much of it was concealed by shrubs and vines, it would be easy to overlook.

To make things worse, the path ran alongside a busy walkway used by children attending Nathaniel Hawthorne Elementary School, as well as by joggers and dog-walkers trying to get to nearby Millar Park.

The trench is the result of an old drainage pipe's collapsing underground. Water run-off from the school site caused further erosion and made the hole bigger every time it rained.

University City filled the trench about two weeks ago and has seeded the area for grass. The pipe wasn't replaced, so there still may be run-off problems, but the immediate danger to children is gone.

WHO GOT IT FIXED

Evelyn Shields-Benford • University City's director of public works

Storm, July 1, 2007, C3

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