

By JESSICA CRAWFORD • Daily Leader The 1-cent sales tax is once again to thank for yet another improvement within the City of Liberal. Western Avenue is nearing completion and will stand as a reminder of Liberal's progress for years to come.

Public Works Director Joe Sealey was happy to announce that citizens will be able to travel Western Avenue, in its entirety, as early as Friday.

"On Western, they have the two southbound lanes done and they have one northbound lane probably 60 percent complete," Sealey said. "They will probably finish up either this evening or Friday morning."

Although traffic will once again be allowed on the entire length of Western Avenue as early as Friday, minor construction will continue, Sealey said.

"What will be left is the traffic markings, the sidewalk and, I think, there are about three wheelchair ramps that need to be done," he said.

Sealey was proud to report the project will be complete way before the time allotted.

"There were 210 days construction time, and we started in mid-April," he said. "So they are really ahead of schedule by quite a bit."

The project, which is being funded by the 1-cent sales tax, is also under budget, Sealey said.

"I haven't got the final numbers yet, but with the change orders we have had, I am going to say it is going to be right at \$4 million or just over," he said. "We are still under our overall budget. We had budgeted \$4.18 million or \$4.2 million for that. We were running over the initial cost because of change orders, but we are still under what we anticipated it was going to cost overall."

Sealey said the quality of the new and improved Western Avenue is beyond what he had expected.

"If this had been done by the fair, it would have got a grand champion ribbon on it," Sealey concluded with a chuckle.