Blasting through Parksville mountain

By Dan Hust

PARKSVILLE — The new Route 17 bypass being built around Parksville won’t save much time or mileage, but it will avoid the last remaining traffic light along the entire route.

And that will pave the way for 17 to be designated Interstate 86, the primary reason for this near-$100 million project — currently the biggest road construction project in the Southern Tier.

Overseeing it all is Jeffersonville native Ed Mall, the 35-year-old engineer-in-charge for the NYS Department of Transportation (DOT). The three-mile bypass cuts through the northern flank of the mountain southwest of Parksville, with 13 bridges (six eastbound, six westbound...
and one on the new road leading from the highway to Parksville), plus massive fills, embankments and rock cuts to ensure a grade of no more than four percent.

In cooperation with the Village of Liberty, the DOT is even chipping in (and doing the work) to replace the village's 1930s-era 8-inch water main with a 12-inch version, where the pipeline runs underneath part of the project on its way from Lily Pond to Liberty four miles to the south.

Utilizing as many as 200 workers on any given day, Mall and his DOT colleagues plan to work virtually year-round to ensure the bypass is open by 2012 (though at least one set of lanes may be in operation by late 2011).

Courtesy of the DOT – in particular, Mall and spokesman David Hamburg – the Democrat recently got an up-close tour of the massive project, which on that particular day featured a spectacular blasting job by Maine Drilling and Blasting.