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## **Bi-State Celebration Marks Opening of New Amelia Earhart Memorial Bridge**

The new Amelia Earhart Memorial Bridge in Atchison officially opened today at a ribbon-cutting ceremony on the bridge deck.

The AE Memorial Bridge, which is scheduled to open to traffic later today, will serve as an iconic gateway for travelers crossing the Missouri River between Kansas and Missouri.

The opening celebration was conducted under the signature arch span and included comments by Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback; Kansas Transportation Secretary Mike King; Missouri Department of Transportation Director Kevin Keith; Kansas Rep. Jerry Henry; Atchison Mayor Allen Reavis; and Atchison County

Commissioner Jeff Schuele. The event also included Ann Birney as Amelia Earhart and a ceremonial bike ride across the bridge by students from Atchison USD 409, Atchison County USD 377, Atchison Catholic Elementary School, Trinity Lutheran School and Atchison Area Homeschoolers.

The bridge, a four-lane, tied arch structure stretching nearly 2,500 feet over the Missouri River, is distinguished by its double steel arches on the main river span and special aesthetic lighting. It replaces the existing two-lane structure, which was completed in 1938 and is too narrow to handle some of today's larger truck loads and farm implements. The extra lanes also will accommodate the greater numbers of vehicles that now pass over the bridge daily.

Construction of the bridge began in the spring of 2009. The removal of the existing bridge is scheduled for early 2013.

The AE Memorial Bridge replacement is a cooperative project funded by the Kansas and Missouri transportation departments. Of the \$59.4 million construction cost, KDOT will contribute \$30.6 million and MoDOT will contribute \$28.8 million. The City of Atchison also contributed funding for aesthetic lighting on the arch span section of the bridge.

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