

NEWS RELEASE

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Ceremony marks start of Atchison bridge project

ATCHISON – A groundbreaking ceremony along the Missouri River this morning officially launched the bi-state project to replace the Amelia Earhart Memorial Bridge between Atchison and Winthrop, Mo.

The four-lane, tied arch structure will stretch nearly 2,500 feet, distinguished by its double steel arches on the main river span and special aesthetic lighting. It will replace 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.

The new bridge will be located 78 feet south of the existing bridge on US-59 in Atchison. When it is completed in late 2011, removal of the existing structure will begin. During construction, the old bridge will be maintained and inspected on a regular basis.

“The new bridge will be an important safety enhancement and will support the local economy. Currently, trucks with oversize loads must use the river crossings at Leavenworth or St. Joseph, adding 20 to 30 miles and greater expense to the trip,” said Kansas Transportation Secretary Deb Miller.

“And, the unique design makes this structure an attractive addition to the Atchison cityscape and is a worthy tribute to Amelia Earhart,” she said.

The bridge replacement is a cooperative project funded by the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) and the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT). Of the construction cost of \$59.4 million, Kansas will contribute \$30.6 million and MoDOT will contribute \$28.8 million.

"Missouri has more large bridges than any other state so we certainly understand the great importance and great expense involved in replacing a bridge like this one," said MoDOT Director Pete Rahn.

"The great partnership we have with the Kansas Department of Transportation has allowed us to share in the cost of this major investment that will make travel safer and support jobs in both states. We are excited that construction is starting on what will be a beautiful new bridge."

In addition to Secretary Miller and Director Rahn, participating in the groundbreaking was Kansas Rep. Jerry Henry of Cummings and Atchison Mayor David Butler.

The bridge is being constructed by Archer Western Contractors of Chicago. The project plans and specifications were developed by MACTEC Engineering & Consulting and HNTB.

A high resolution Web camera will be installed at the construction site later this month and will provide a color image of construction activities. The image, which will be refreshed every 15 minutes, will be posted online at www.ktoc.net.

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