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## Keystone Bridge project shows progress as it starts to shut down for winter

Submitted by admin on Tue, 11/22/2022 - 11:11



Work on Elkader's Keystone Bridge is coming to a stop for the season, and will resume in the spring. "Significant progress" was made on the

By Willis Patenaude, Times-Register

As snow begins to fall, the Keystone Bridge rehabilitation project is coming to a stop—at least until next spring. With this development, project engineer Nate Miller from Origin Design submitted the latest construction progress report to the Elkader city council, discussing what's been completed and what remains for next year.

The progress update said "significant progress" was made on the project over the previous few weeks, most notably the completion of the approach roadway paving on both sides of the bridge and installation of utilities, including electrical, the storm water collection and management systems adjacent to the

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project over the previous few weeks.



*Most of what has been completed on the Keystone Bridge involved what project engineer Nate Miller called “readily visible” tasks, and no visible task has been as significant as the replacement of these six deteriorated stones.*

bridge. Additionally, prior to paving, existing pavement was removed, the subgrade prepared and the foundations for lighting completed.

But with the paving, there was previous discussion that weather could pose a threat to the integrity of the work. In an email exchange, Miller stated the temperature drop “will not affect the structural integrity of the paving.” He added that several steps were taken to mitigate such an occurrence, including monitoring the internal temperature of the concrete during “critical cure times,” monitoring atmospheric and subgrade temperatures prior to pouring and during the curing period, as well as the utilization of heated water in the concrete mixture and the insulation of newly placed pavement.

Most of what has been completed involved what Miller called “readily visible” tasks, and no visible task has been as significant to the project as the replacement of the six deteriorated stones that caused so much tumult several months ago.

On this project objective, the progress update provided a timeline of events, indicating the “completed stabilization

efforts” and removal of the last stone from the bridge occurred Oct. 25. This removal process was done with handheld tools selected to “limit the energy imparted during the removal process,” Miller said.

The replacement stones were then hand shaped by on site masons to the exact dimensions of the stone being replaced. Included in this process is a lengthy list of procedures, which Miller provided to give some insight into thoroughness of the project. Each replacement stone had to be sawed, grinded and chipped into the final shape and size required and then set into place with “material handler-mounted stone spear.”

Once this was done, the stone was lifted and rotated into place and supported by the temporary shoring system. During this phase, the stones were tuck-pointed and a specialized grout was injected into the joints between each stone. According to Miller, the arch itself will support the weight of the newly placed stones.

Of course, this again raises the issue of the weather and how it could impact the grout, but Miller said there should be no complications, most notably because “special materials were selected to ensure” the grout would cure within the current temperatures.

To further guarantee the integrity of the grout, Miller said samples were taken at each stage of grout placement and tested for compressive strength to verify it meets the required level. According to Miller, the grout was also reviewed with the manufacturer’s technical representative before it was injected, to confirm its compatibility.

The progress update indicated the grout was placed Nov. 10, and the final arch anchoring pins were all that was remaining before the shoring can be removed, most likely at the end of November, after the grout has had a chance to cure.

Miller said the stone removal and replacement process went “pretty much according to plan,” though the hand shaping of the replacement stones took a little longer than expected due to what Miller stated was the “high quality and strength of the quarried material.”

The project completion date remains Dec. 28, 2023. While there has been noticeable progress on the Keystone Bridge—and some of it even finished ahead of schedule—Miller noted none of it is what’s termed a “critical path item,” resulting in the timeline staying as is.

But what is a critical path item? In Miller’s words, they’re items that are “directly associated with the work to be completed on the bridge,” which could not be finished before the stabilization and replacement efforts.

What remains to be done is a lengthy list, including some 61 specific items that need to be completed sequentially due to the “specific nature of the activities.” Miller even provided an example of a sequential item yet to be completed: installation of the pavement over the bridge deck. This project alone requires that 25 specific work items be completed before pavement of the bridge deck, including installation of the structural support system for the cantilevered sidewalk and the moisture control system. This sequential order impacts the overall timeline.

As the work site begins to shut down, Miller stated all efforts will be made to maintain pedestrian access that “meets the needs of the community” during the winter months. On this topic, the council previously discussed the numerous tripping and safety hazards on the walkway, such as barricades falling over and rods sticking out. In response to this item, Miller said those issues have been addressed, and indicated the contractor was installing additional anchorage and ballast to the barricades to “minimize future issues.”

Miller expects full work on site to resume in April 2023. Focus will be on the bridge restoration activities and additional work, including the installation of tie rods for the sidewalk and the waterproof membrane laid so the bridge can be paved.

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On a related issue, the council approved Resolution 2022-47, which is a "resolution providing for the issuance of a general obligation annual appropriation bridge improvement loan agreement anticipation project note." All four council members in attendance voted for the resolution. Randy Henning was not present.

According to Elkader City Administrator Jennifer Cowsert, this basically means the interim financing of up to \$3 million has been approved, so the city can pay bills as it goes through the construction project. Once the project is done, the city will assess what's needed for permanent financing.

Cowsert and city officials attempted to offset this loan by securing funds elsewhere, but as Cowsert noted, continued conversations with federal representatives has led to no additional funding and the city's GoFundMe page established in August has raised just \$969 of its \$180,000 goal. "Our GoFundMe page has not taken off," Cowsert commented.

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