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FITZGERALD, Officials Celebrate New Dooker's Hollow Bridge with Ribbon Cutting

PITTSBURGH – County Executive Rich Fitzgerald was joined today by Senator Jim Brewster, officials from East Pittsburgh and North Braddock, and Public Works department staff to cut the ribbon and open the newly replaced Dooker’s Hollow Bridge. The bridge carries Bell Avenue in North Braddock and Center Street in East Pittsburgh over O’Connell Boulevard.

“We are thrilled to celebrate completion of this important infrastructure project,” said Fitzgerald. “Connecting folks to jobs and amenities is so important, especially in places like the Mon Valley that haven’t seen as much growth and investment. The previous bridge was in poor condition and eventually would have needed to be closed. Instead, by working together at the federal, state, and local level, we have ensured that this vital transportation link between two communities can be used for generations to come.”

The old structure, which opened in 1940, was a 635-foot arched cantilever truss bridge with three spans. It had deteriorated to the point where a 31-ton weight limit needed to be implemented and rehabilitation was no longer a cost-effective option. It was closed for construction on October 19, 2020 and imploded on February 13, 2021 using 96 explosives placed at 54 locations – safely bringing down 470 tons of debris into the valley below.

The new structure is a 660-foot steel girder bridge with five spans. The added length and number of spans makes it more structurally sound and brings its design up to current standards. The bridge is expected to carry about 3,000 vehicles daily.

Construction of the new bridge, which began last March, required laborers and ironworkers to perform some of their work 140 feet – or about 13 stories – above the valley floor. More than 3,500 cubic yards of concrete was used to complete the structure – enough to fill about 17,000 standard bathtubs. Also, 1.7 million pounds of steel was used, which is the weight of about 500 passenger cars. In addition to replacing the bridge, crews also installed new drainage, pavement, sidewalk, curb, fencing, lighting, pavement markings, and signage. A section of O’Connell Boulevard will be repaved next spring.

“Removing the old structure and constructing a new bridge of this size over the steep valley presented immense challenges, but I’m proud to say Public Works and its partners were more than up to the task,” said Stephen Shanley, P.E., Public Works Director. “Thank you to everyone involved who made this very necessary project possible through hard work and collaboration.”

The $9.95 million project, which began on July 13, 2020, was funded by the Federal Highway Administration, PennDOT, and Allegheny County. It was led by Public Works and done by Allison Park Contractors (contractor), AECOM (consultant designer), and Michael Baker International (construction management and inspection).

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