

Replacement of Woodlawn Avenue Bridge Beams Mark Milestone

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The first beam was placed Tuesday afternoon.

PITTSFIELD, Mass. — The beams spanning the Woodlawn Avenue bridge have been laid.

The long-awaited project will connect the Morningside neighborhood with East Street and is seen as not only a north-south connection but also a boost to the development of the William Stanley Business Park, which it cuts through.

The road was closed to traffic in 2006 and the bridge demolished in 2012. The reconstruction lifts the bridge high enough to allow double-decker trains to fit underneath.

"It's a huge step. The abutments are complete. We're spanning the bridge with steel and getting ready to set the deck," said Pittsfield Economic Development Authority Executive Director Corydon Thurston.

The \$4.2 million state project was delayed multiple times with construction finally started in the spring. The goal is to have the road reopened in 2016. The placing of the beams, a total of eight, represents somewhat of a topping-off ceremony. The beams will be covered by a steel decking followed by concrete.

"Eventually there will be a road surface on top of that," Thurston said.

The beams represent a midway point in construction with the biggest benefit being that coordination with the railroad will be at a minimum. A protective floor will be placed underneath the beams and the majority of the remaining work will take place above the tracks, so trains can still operate unabridged.

Since the road has been closed, traffic has been diverted over residential and winding roads. For PEDDA, the exposure of being able to drive through and see the sites will help attract businesses to the park and improves transportation around the city for any company that does move there.

"I believe it will be a very popular route to connect north to the south," Thurston said.

The city transferred the land to PEDDA in 2011 for reconstruction and the demolition took place shortly after. However, the state was uncertain about the level of replacement so the property sat for eight months with no action. In 2012, state Sen. Benjamin Downing secured \$2 million in state funding for the project in a bond bill but that money was dependent on being completed in 2013 in conjunction with the remediation of Silver Lake.

The city then found out that the City Council needed to take some additional easements by eminent domain to proceed. Both General Electric and PEDDA waived payments for the easements.

From there, the state's bidding process pushed back the construction yet again. Ultimately, Northern Construction, of Palmer, was awarded the contract.

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