

St. Anthony Falls

I-35 Bridge in Minnesota Proceeds Despite Bad Weather

Construction of the new St. Anthony Falls Bridge to replace the Interstate 35W bridge that collapsed in August 2007 in Minnesota is proceeding well ahead of schedule. Originally scheduled to open by Dec. 24, 2008 — 437 days after the initial collapse — the rapid-fire design-build schedule had the structure 70 percent complete by mid-June, with an expected opening date of mid-October, if not before.

Since the last DATELINE report, workers have finished foundation work, poured footings and completed piers. Footing and pier pours continued through the winter months, as long as the temperature remained above 20 below zero.

Workers built heated sheds to allow the pre-cast segments to be cast and cured during the winter months. They built the steel falsework for cast-in-place segments at the bridge approaches, built support structures for cranes to lift the pre-cast main span segments into place and shored up retaining walls. A concrete crusher demolished the remains of the old roadway, which were recycled for the base of the new one as well.

With the pre-cast segments complete, crews hauled them to Bohemian Flats, where they were loaded onto barges for the final leg of their journey to the bridge site. Once there, the ringer crane, Big Ben, could begin lifting the segments into place.

While the segments are being lifted into place, the navigation channel under that area is closed to all traffic until the construction work for that day is complete, usually 12 hours.

Throughout the project, crews worked around the clock on both sides of the river and in the casting yard. They expect to install up to four of the 120 the pre-cast segments each day.

In addition to the construction milestones, the community outreach initiative surrounding the bridge construction continues as well.

Project representatives have installed touch-screen kiosks in the lobby of the Mill City Museum and the main mall of the Minneapolis airport. The kiosks have background and overview information about the project, links to a photo gallery and webcam and animations showing the finished bridge from a variety of viewpoints.

Across the state, extreme weather conditions — including heavy rains and hail — have multiplied road repairs and forced state officials to close a number of roads and bridges. Despite these challenges, the Minnesota Department of Transportation now has a plan to

improve state highways and bridges extending through 2018. It specifically addresses bridges that are either “fracture critical” or that have low sufficiency scores.

The \$2.5 billion plan includes major replacement projects such as Interstate 90 over the Mississippi River near Dresbach, the I-35E Cayuga Bridge in St. Paul and the Highway 36 St. Croix River crossing south of Stillwater.