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Top officials join Missouri and Illinois Departments of Transportation to launch construction of new river bridge

ST. LOUIS – The Missouri and Illinois Departments of Transportation broke ground this morning on the main span of the new Mississippi River Bridge in a ceremony on the deck of the Eads Bridge.

The two departments were joined by a number of state and local officials, including U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, Illinois Governor Pat Quinn, U.S. Senators Christopher “Kit” Bond and Richard Durbin, and U.S. Congressman Jerry Costello.

"It has taken an extraordinary amount of effort from Illinois and Missouri to get to this point," said Pete Rahn, MoDOT Director. "Today we start realizing a regional vision more than 20 years in the making. We are confident that we are building the right bridge, in the right place, at the right time. Relocating I-70 from the Poplar Street Bridge will be key in giving the region real options."

"We are very excited to take part in building the first new bridge in more than 40 years to connect downtown St. Louis and southwestern Illinois," said Illinois Transportation Secretary Gary Hannig. "This project is a major step forward for the region and will dramatically improve safety, relieve congestion on the Poplar Street Bridge and boost the economy in both states. As work on the new Mississippi River Bridge advances, Illinois will continue to do its part and work diligently to ensure the success of the project."

This new bridge will be a four-lane, cable-stayed structure across the Mississippi River from St. Clair County, Illinois to St. Louis, Missouri that will improve traffic safety and reduce congestion across the region, especially on the Poplar Street Bridge, which now carries I-55, I-64, and I-70. This new bridge will also help to sustain economic growth and development in the greater St. Louis metropolitan area by creating jobs on both sides of the river.

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The river bridge project is expected to contribute to more than \$25 billion in new economic growth over the next 45 years and to create roughly 2,200 primary and secondary jobs.

The New Mississippi River Bridge is part of a group of roadway improvement projects that will connect I-70 to the I-55/64/70 interchange in East St. Louis and to I-70 near Cass Avenue in Missouri. The entire project will cost a total of \$670 million and is being funded through a combination of federal and state funds. The New Mississippi River Bridge project is expected to be complete in 2014.

The main span of the bridge will be constructed by a contractor team made up of Massman Construction/Traylor Brothers/Alberici Constructors (MTA). Alberici Constructors is a St. Louis based firm, Massman Construction is from Kansas City and Traylor Brothers is from Evansville, Ind.

“We are looking forward to working with IDOT and MoDOT on this exciting project that will greatly enhance safe transportation in and around the St. Louis metro area and will add an interesting new element to the downtown St. Louis skyline,” said Mark Schnoebelen, project sponsor for the MTA team. “The idea of having the opportunity to build a cable stayed bridge with one of the longest spans in the country and with pier towers 400 feet tall is a challenge that any bridge builder worth his salt would relish.”

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Media note: Pete Rahn’s final podcast for MoDOT is on the Mississippi River Bridge project. Media can get sound bites from the podcast at: <http://www.modot.mo.gov/modotpodcast/index.htm>.