

Keep it moving

Multibrige project works around heavy traffic

By Lynne Fort
Associate Editor

Downtown Louisville is home to an intersection of three interstate systems, I-65, I-64 and I-71, and three corresponding bridges taxed to capacity. With a congested downtown area leading to frequent traffic delays and collisions, the city of Louisville knew that a new solution was necessary for drivers.

The solution the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet hit upon was the Downtown Crossing, one piece of a two-part project that was originally conceived in the 1960s. The other bridge being built simultaneously, the East End Crossing, spans the Ohio River. The Downtown Crossing will provide direct access through downtown Louisville and Jeffersonville, Ind.

"One of the most unique things about the Downtown Crossing is that our construction zone is in the heart of downtown Louisville and Jeffersonville," Andy Barber, project manager, told *ROADS & BRIDGES*. "While working to improve cross-river mobility, we don't want to hinder it. We're meeting an aggressive construction schedule while maintaining traffic."

The new bridge will be a three-tower, cable-stayed bridge with six northbound lanes. Each side will have a 12-ft shoulder, and the overall bridge will be 2,114 ft long.

Maintaining traffic flow during construction has been the toughest part of this project,

Barber said. With 225,000 vehicles moving between Louisville and southern Indiana daily, it is a challenge to stay out of the way of drivers while getting the job done. Currently what the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet calls the "Big Squeeze" is in place to allow construction, despite traffic; I-65 is reduced to two lanes in both directions and is expected to remain so until late 2016.

The project is already considering tolling options for the future—temporary transponder readers are in place on the Kennedy Bridge to collect data for effective electronic tolling when the Downtown Crossing and all associated construction is complete. Both Indiana and Kentucky will likely evaluate this data in 2015.

Not only is the Downtown Crossing being built, it is going up adjacent to the old Kennedy Bridge that feeds traffic from Louisville to Jeffersonville. Once the Downtown Crossing is finished, construction will move to the Kennedy, which is going to be reconfigured. In the end, when the project is completely finished in December 2016, cross-river capacity will increase from seven lanes to 12 lanes of I-65.

The cable-stayed bridge will open in April 2016, and will bear the burden of two-way interstate traffic while work on the 50-yr-old Kennedy Bridge goes forward. **R&B**

PROJECT: Downtown Crossing

LOCATION: Louisville, Ky.

OWNER: Kentucky Transportation Cabinet

DESIGNER: Jacobs Engineering

CONTRACTOR: Walsh Construction

COST: \$1.3 billion

START DATE: July 2013

COMPLETION DATE: December 2016