

TRAIL TALK

By Ron Meyers

Cedar View Trail Update, 12/20/06

Work continues on the new bridge on the Cedar View Trail. Just to clarify for any new readers of the newsletter who may not know what this bridge is all about let me give you some more information. This is a Trail Bridge and it will become the property of the Jefferson County Conservation Board when it is completed.

The bridge is necessary because the new Hwy. 34 by-pass goes right through the Cedar View Trail. For both the trail and the highway to exist it was necessary to remove a section of the 30 feet of fill that the trail was on and in its place build a bridge for the trail use with the four lane highway going under the trail bridge. So the trail bridge is part of the IDOT's Highway 34 relocation project.

The contractor that is building this bridge is the Schmidt Construction Company Inc. of Winfield, Iowa. This company has been building bridges in SE Iowa for over 30 years. The project superintendent is Nate Riordan.

This new bridge will be approximately 256 feet long and is approximately 120' shorter and 40' lower then the CVT Bridge that spans Cedar Creek just a half mile to the west. However the spans and the beam lengths are about the same. The new bridge just has two spans and four beams while the Cedar Creek Bridge has three spans and six beams.

Watching the beams come in and get set was very interesting. The beams are made in Iowa Falls and then trucked to the site. This is no easy matter either, as two of the beams were 120' long and the other two were about 136' long. When loaded and pulled down the highway the entire setup from the front of the Truck to the end of the beams is about 150' for the two shorter beams and 170' for the longer two.

When the beams arrived in Fairfield they were delivered to the bridge site via the Cedar View Trail from the 32nd Street access.

Wow, you should have seen those 150' to 170' long rigs make an almost 90 degree turn from 32nd Street on to the trail! It got even more impressive when the trucks backed and maneuvered the beams into place at the bridge site.

They made it look a lot easier than some people do when backing their campers into place in our campground.

Once they get the beams positioned at the site they are lifted off of the truck, raised up and set on the end & center structures by cranes. (One at each end) It looks like a giant erector set and actually, despite being 120 to 136 feet long and weighing over 55 tons each they go together rather well and precisely on target.

It now pretty much looks like a bridge, but it has a ways to go. Bridge decking, short walls, fence, and approach work all have to be done. Winter weather is always very unpredictable so I am not making any guesses when this will all be done, but the contractor plans to continue working on through the winter as the weather permits.

I thought that it might be interesting to recap the bridge building with a series of pictures for those of you who haven't been able to visit the construction site and see the progress for yourself



This is the trail before the bridge construction began.



Contractor removes the trail & old RR fill



“Driving” the pilings for the foundations of the structures for the new bridge. (28 steel beams, 40 to 50 foot long)



One beam is set and the next one arrives.



Building the structures that hold up the beams that hold up the bridge deck.



All four beams are in place now, and no, it’s not going to be a two-lane bridge. The next step is to form and pour a 10’ wide deck over the top of the beams.



Here comes a beam!



A side view as will be seen from the new highway.