



Cass Road Bridge Nears Completion

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by **Al Parker**

Motorists will have one more way to cross the Boardman River when the new Cass Road Bridge opens to traffic on Sept. 16.

“They’re working on railings and still have some painting to do,” say Grand Traverse County Road Commission Engineer Jim Johnson. “And there’s some landscaping, to provide foliage for wildlife, to be done.”

Concrete approaches also still need to be added to connect the new bridge with the existing Cass Road. Construction of the span began in March with the temporary closing of the old one-lane bridge atop the Boardman Dam, forcing area drivers to cross the river at either South Airport or Beitner roads.

After Sept. 16, traffic will continue to use the old one-lane bridge which will be re-opened and leads right to the new span. Then in 2017, the old bridge will be taken down. “By the end of next year, it should be two lanes all the way (from the new bridge) to Keystone Road,” says Johnson.

By the numbers, the new bridge:

- Spans 252 feet, 5 inches
- Contains 1,370 cubic yards of concrete
- Has 2,000 feet of tube railings
- Contains 156,234 .8 feet of coated and uncoated steel – 29.6 miles if laid in a straight line
- Sits on 88 sections of pilings measuring 4,165 feet

The dam, which was constructed in 1894 and rebuilt in 1930, is scheduled for **demolition next summer** as part of a multi-agency project to remove three dams across the Boardman. In 2005, Traverse City Light and Power determined that it would not be economically feasible to produce hydropower at the Boardman, Sabin and Brown Bridge dams and they would be removed. Part of that effort involves rerouting the river under the new Cass Road Bridge and removing the powerhouse of the dam next year.

The new bridge is largely funded by a \$3 million state grant, with another \$480,000 contributed by the Grand Traverse County Road Commission.

During the six months of construction, contractors closed off the entire area due to safety concerns. Two hiking areas near the north and south of the dam on the west side of the river were impacted by the project. Work crews used the parking lots to stage heavy equipment and to store lumber needed for bank stabilization and habitat creation.

The primary contractor for the project was Davis Construction, a Lansing-based company that specializes in the construction of bridges, municipal buildings and other large projects. Davis did most of the bridge work, while Team Elmer's served as a subcontractor.

Team Elmer's handled mass excavation work, storm sewer utility work and roadwork, including grading and paving, according to the company's Project Manager Nick Broad.

"We also supplied the concrete for the structures poured on-site, including the bridge deck, abutments and approach slabs," he says. "The main difficulty of the project for us has been the dam being in while construction is occurring. Weight restrictions imposed on the existing dam severely limited access to one side of the site for materials and equipment."

Original Article: <http://www.traverseticker.com/story/cass-road-bridge-nears-completion>