

JIM THORPE BRIDGE REPLACEMENT

Jim Thorpe Borough, Carbon County, Pennsylvania

PROJECT UPDATE – MAY 2007

New PA 903 Jim Thorpe Bridge Alignment

After several years of preliminary engineering activities and an assessment of the area's environmental and historical resources, PennDOT and local officials have identified a



The final three alignments considered for the new bridge.

preferred alignment for a replacement PA 903 bridge over the Lehigh River in the Borough of Jim Thorpe.

PennDOT's engineering team studied the feasibility of building the new crossing at more than 12 locations and systematically reviewed the various alternatives with borough, Carbon County, and state officials. A consensus was reached in the Fall of 2006 to develop plans to build a new bridge in a generally straight alignment with PA 903/North Street.

The proposed structure will cross the scenic Lehigh River approximately 900 feet upstream from the existing bridge. Other alternatives crossed the river at locations north and south of the current site. Each alternative was assessed and scrutinized according to its benefits and shortcomings based on safety, environmental impacts, detours during

construction, utility and railroad impacts, and overall costs.

The proposed North Street alignment would eliminate the dogleg that PA 903 now follows along West Front Street. Local and county officials cited the improvements in traffic and pedestrian safety that will be gained by eliminating traffic flow through the east side of the Borough under the recommended alignment.

Reductions in noise and air pollution in residential areas are added benefits of the new bridge's location. The new alignment also complements plans for a multi-use trail along the Delaware and Lehigh Canal in the vicinity of the existing bridge.

A Closer Look at the North Street Alignment

The North Street alignment will cause no significant traffic impacts during construction, because the existing bridge will remain open during construction. Minimal impacts to rail service during construction are anticipated.

Some properties, mostly on the east side of the river, will be affected by construction of the new bridge and related structures such as retaining walls. Any impacts to recreational, environmental, and historical resources will be assessed as the design progresses.



The historic Canal Lock.

The New Bridge

The proposed alignment of the preferred alternative will connect the bridge with the PA 903/North Street/Main Street intersection on the east side of the river. The new bridge then will step off the eastern banks of the Lehigh River near the rail lines and the historic Canal Lock and cross the river, connecting to the west side over the Carbon & Schuylkill Railroad tracks. The western approach will connect with US 209 at a new signalized intersection north of the Downtown area.

The bridge's layout – including the number and location of piers – will be developed during the Final Design stage. The new structure will likely have a low profile, much like an interstate highway bridge, and will have a context-sensitive design suitable for its location.



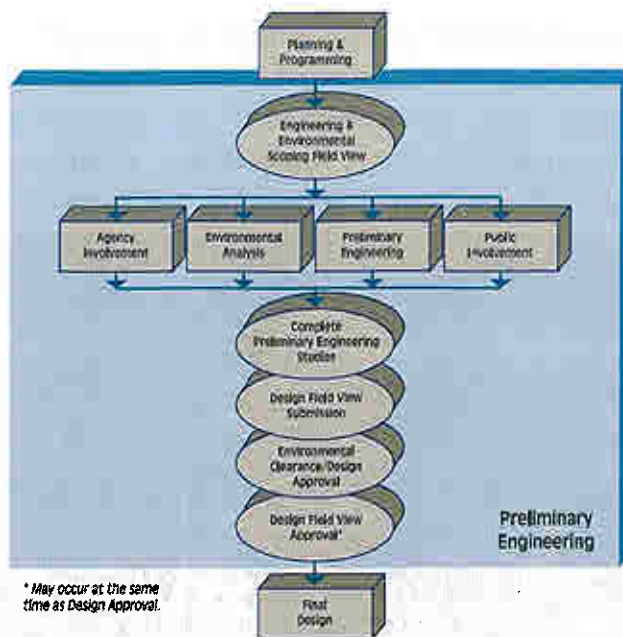
The existing Jim Thorpe Bridge.

Where we go from here

As the project moves from Preliminary Engineering into the Final Design stage, the design team will focus on determining any environmental impacts in the proposed construction area.

Preliminary environmental studies have identified wetlands, historic areas, archaeological resources, and recreational facilities within the project area. Potential impacts to these and other resources will be

identified and assessed. Mitigation for any impacts to such resources will be coordinated with the relevant resource agencies.



The PennDOT Preliminary Design Process.

As the design progresses, project engineers will begin locating the bridge's piers, then develop plans for bridge foundations. Once the substructure design is set, engineering will focus on designing the superstructure – the beams, pavement, sidewalks, rails, etc. Approach roadway plans will be drawn up, and new intersections with PA 903 on the east side and US 209 on the west side will be laid out.

PennDOT also will develop a Right-of-Way Plan to identify the properties that will be affected. Property specialists will work with the affected property owners for a smooth process of purchasing any land needed for the project.

The remaining stages of design and right-of-way acquisition are expected to take about three years to complete. The project will then go to bid, and the new bridge will be constructed.

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