

Construction Update for The U.S. 64 Entrance To Tribal Complex

By Toni Hill
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Phase One of the construction of a bridge over Black Bear Creek by Oklahoma Bridge Contractors from Edmond, Okla. is now under way. This segment will involve the creation of the bridge leading to Phase Two, pavement construction. This structure will eventually link the Administrative Complex and the Indian Health Services Center to U.S. 64 East.

This project had sparked discussion for more than a decade due to a need for additional access to the Pawnee Nation headquarters that includes Indian Health Services, Pawnee Nation Law Enforcement and Pawnee Nation District Court, Pawnee Nation College and many other tribal offices and programs.

Currently, the only routes to the Tribal complex utilize the green bridge located on East Harrison Street that turns into Agency road and Morris road is often blocked due to railroad usage.

Brawley Engineering Inc. designed the new entry following specifications required by the Federal Highway Administration to ensure established federal standards. One area of focus included ensuring that the project allowed for proper water disbursement to avoid flooding.

“This project was not designed to compromise existing business revenue for Pawnee,” said Cecil Riding In, Pawnee Nation transportation director. “However, based on the number of commuters that currently use the existing pathways, more than 2,700 cars daily, the Pawnee Nation felt that another option was necessary to ensure safe and unrestricted travel.”

Project completion for Phase One is targeted for April 2012. Very little inconvenience is expected regarding day-to-day operation although travel within the work area is prohibited due to the use of heavy equipment for clearing and dirt work.

“We would like to thank the citizens of Pawnee for their support,” said Jim R. McCormick, project manager. “This development could also ease traffic burdens on existing venues of travel without having any known negative effects on business revenue.”

The project is starting to look like a bridge. The bridge work is going according to plan, and the Contractor is finished with the abutments, columns, beams, and upstream rip rap. The bridge deck is being formed and the reinforcing steel for the deck and sidewalk is being placed. This will take a couple of days and concrete will be placed just as soon as the weather allows concrete placement. Other minor construction activities such as metal rails and approach slab curbing will follow the deck work, along with some cleanup, while the concrete is being allowed to properly cure, and tests completed. With continued good weather, this bridge work phase will be complete by the end of February, and then the second phase will begin.

Any concerns regarding the construction should be directed to the Pawnee Nation Department of Transportation and Safety at (918) 762-3655.

Editor’s note: Article updates provided by Pawnee Nation Transportation Director Cecil Riding In.