



kcICON Quarterly Project Newsletter Fall 2008 Issue - Monday, November 24, 2008

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You are receiving this e-mail as a means of keeping you updated on the activities associated with MoDOT's kcICON (Interstate Connections 29/35) Project.

Workforce Development

As part of an ongoing commitment to increase the number of minority, female and economically disadvantaged individuals working in the construction industry, the Missouri Department of Transportation and Paseo Corridor Constructors have initiated an on-the-job training program that currently includes 21 people working on the construction side of this design-build project.



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On-the-Job Training

Although he's just starting down the career path toward journeyman status, Gregory Preston, Jr. already possesses an important trait for success in the working world - a thirst for knowledge.

As a laborer apprentice working with Paseo Corridor Constructor's river bridge crew, Preston has already learned some things about crane signals, flagging, checking for overhead hazards near crane operations and how to hold a jackhammer. But that's just the start of what he wants to do.

"I'd like to do welding, carpentry - everything really. I'm trying to learn as much as I can so I'm useful," Preston said, adding that he's learning something new every day.

Although he had some experience with remodeling houses, Preston had no heavy construction background when he followed his cousin's advice and signed up with the Laborer's Local #663 in early October. The next day he was assigned to the kcICON Project, and was soon walking across steel I-beams in the middle of the Missouri River measuring the ground level for the center pylon shafts.

In addition to the 3,200 working hours required to finish the apprenticeship program, Preston is putting in the 164 hours of requisite classroom work. Having already finished the program's orientation class, he plans to take the second course in January and eventually study everything from environmental regulations to workplace safety standards.

For now, though, he enjoys the day-to-day contributions he is making toward building Kansas City's newest iconic river crossing.

"I love wearing a hard hat. You feel like you're really doing something," Preston said, adding, "I can't wait until the bridge is done and I can bring my (3) kids down here and say 'I helped build that.'"

What started as a leisurely motorcycle ride nearly four years ago turned into a career-changing experience for Lori Lamb and she hasn't looked back since.



The one-time marketing assistant knew she wanted relief from the everyday stresses of working for an inside sales company but didn't know she would find it while riding her Harley past the Operating Engineers Local #101 office.

Remembering the suggestion of a friend who said she might like construction work, Lori went into the building, picked up an application packet and in March 2005 began her apprenticeship as an operating engineer.

Her first job was as an oiler for a crane operator - a job she describes as being "greasy, dirty and horrendously fun." Since then she has become certified to operate a forklift and on the kcICON Project she has driven an articulated dump truck and vibratory compaction roller for Paseo Corridor Constructors.

"I can't wait to run the dozer and the blade. I want to have the knowledge to operate as many pieces of equipment as I can," Lamb said, adding that learning the differences in how each piece of equipment runs is part of the ever-changing challenges she likes in her new line of work.

"I want to take the time and learn how to operate the equipment the right way. It's important to not make an error that would hurt somebody," she said. In fact, one of the first things she does when confronting a new piece of equipment is to look at the machinery and plan a safe way to get her 5-foot frame safely into the cab.

It's that take-charge attitude that stops other people from ever questioning whether or not this mother of four can do the job. After all, as she points out, "I'm not short until I stand next to somebody who is 6-foot-5."

John Vaca knew he was looking for more financial stability for his family when he signed up with Laborer's Local #663, but he was unsure what else a career in construction would offer.



A former warehouse manager, Vaca has a brother-in-law with an asphalt paving company and a cousin who works for Comanche Construction, Inc., but he himself had very little construction experience and no background at all in heavy highway construction when Paseo Corridor Constructors came calling.

"The work here is not as intense as I assumed it to be. They (supervisors) are very patient and understanding and they take their time to show me the right way to do things," Vaca said.

Tasks he's done on the kcICON Project thus far include operating power tools like saws and pneumatic wrenches, setting up concrete barriers along the roadway, vegetation and site clearing, and grade checking - the last of which he has enjoyed most thus far. As someone who "loves to crunch numbers," Vaca said the calculations involved with making sure the elevations of the ground coincides with the project plans makes this the most interesting part of the job.

Other aspects of the work he takes pleasure in are the steady pay and the health insurance benefits. And as a husband and father of three children (with a fourth on the way), Vaca encourages other people looking for professional advancement to consider these factors.

"It's not as bad working out here as some people might think. I was looking for something better in the long-term for my family and have found this to be a great opportunity to provide for them," he said.

Helping chip away sections of I-29/35 bridges that have stood in place for more than 50 years might seem like hard work to some, but hard work isn't something **Jerome Spires** shies away from.



"I like hard work. When you're on your feet working hard the days go by quicker. There are some days when lunch time comes that it seems like we just got here," Spires said.

As a member of the Paseo Corridor Constructors grading crew, Spires has helped with flagging duties, removed formwork after concrete pours and operated a jackhammer to remove sections of the railroad viaduct bridge just south of the Front Street interchange.

With a brother-in-law and father who are cement masons, Spires said he had helped build driveways before, but hadn't done anything like the work he's doing on the kcICON Project.

Like most of the on-the-job trainees on this project, Spires is just beginning the three-year process toward journeyman status, but he can already see what the future holds by looking toward his co-workers.

"We have crew members who have been through the apprenticeship program so they know what I'm going through," he said. "My goal is to learn as much as I can and grow so I can get to journeyman status and be at the top of the pay scale."

With a strong work ethic and clear vision of where he wants to be someday, this father of two boys said success in the construction industry depends greatly on a person's attitude.

"My advice to anyone going into a career in construction is to show them you're all about business and that you're serious about it. If you're serious, they'll see that and you'll go a long way," he said.

High-Tech Highway

Following the progress of the kcICON Project construction and coping with its impacts has gotten easier with technological features recently introduced by MoDOT.

A camera positioned on top of the Paseo Bridge gives a bird's-eye view of the work progressing on the new Christopher S. Bond Bridge and a second camera located downstream will give a more panoramic view of the new bridge as the bridge deck sections are being built next year.

Images from both cameras are currently online and can be seen by logging onto www.kcicon.com and clicking on the Project Webcam button. A third camera will be in place soon just north of the river bridge to provide a better look at some of the highway work taking place.

"It's not every day that a new river bridge is built within a stone's throw of an existing bridge - we're thrilled to offer a unique view into the heart of our project," said kcICON Project Director Brian Kidwell.



A view from the web camera that's positioned on top of the Paseo Bridge looking down into the cofferdam for the construction of the new bridge foundation.

Progress photos are captured between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. daily and Web camera features enable visitors to e-mail a current or archived photo, view an animation or open a Web window to view a time lapse movie. The current movie stored on the site gives a quick glimpse at work done Saturday, Nov. 8, to pour the concrete footing for the bridge.

Another web-based feature that commuters will find useful is the “My KC Scout” feature recently unveiled by the KDOT and MoDOT traffic management system. This service lets travelers receive traffic alerts any time of day via e-mail or via text messaging to a cell phone or pager. Users have the option of receiving information about system-wide traffic conditions or entering specific starting and ending locations along specified highway corridors.

To sign up for this service, go to www.kcscout.net and click on “My KC Scout” on the top menu bar.

Safety Spotlight

With the approaching holidays comes the increased likelihood of the season’s first measurable snowfall. Combine these less-than-ideal roadway conditions with driving through a construction zone and the challenges increase exponentially for motorists - even for people driving snowplows.

Even though MoDOT has 2,800 maintenance workers and 1,800 vehicles available for snow removal, these resources must cover a 32,000-mile highway system, making it virtually impossible to have every highway cleared immediately after a snowstorm. Given this fact, the department has a prioritized system for determining which roads get cleared first.

Roads with the highest traffic volumes are cleared first (including interstates and other major routes), followed by the heaviest-traveled sections of state numbered and lettered routes and then the lower-volume numbered and lettered routes. Lastly, crews clean up the accumulation on shoulders, bridge edges and interchanges.

While the kcICON Project corridor falls into the highest priority category as an interstate highway, drivers should exercise patience as plow drivers must contend with more narrow lanes, concrete barriers in different locations, temporary traffic control devices in places and shifting lanes. These unusual conditions will make snow removal more difficult along the I-29/35 corridor from Armour Road to the downtown loop.

Along with being patient, there are some things that every highway commuter can do to be better prepared for the winter driving season:

- Winterize your car with fresh antifreeze, a good battery and oil that will withstand the rigors of cold weather.
- Inspect your vehicle, paying special attention to your tire conditions, brakes, windshield wipers and windshield wiper fluid.

- Store some basic items in your vehicle that might be of use should you become stuck: a flashlight with extra batteries; blankets, gloves, socks and a hat to keep warm; a small bag of sand or cat litter for wheel traction; a small shovel; and booster cables.
- If possible, avoid driving until the roads are cleared and treated. However, if it is necessary to be on the roads immediately following a snowstorm, here are some basic driving tips:
 - Always wear your seat belt.
 - Adjust your speed to suit driving conditions.
 - Watch for other vehicles having problems with road conditions.
 - Allow extra room between your vehicle and the one in front of you.
 - Give snowplows plenty of room and do not pass them.
 - Keep mirrors, windows and lights clean and keep your lights on.
 - Keep your fuel tank at least half full.

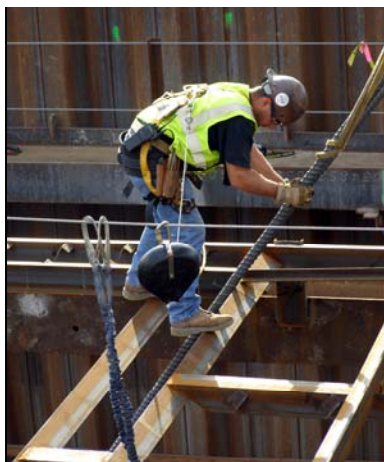
For road condition information, log onto:

<http://maps.modot.mo.gov/travelerinformation/TravelerInformation.aspx>

What's New?

Design work for the kcICON Project is nearing 100 percent completion with the project as a whole more than 30 percent complete. Through September, the lead design firm - Parsons Transportation Group - and its subcontract forces had logged more than 115,200 hours on design activities.

As construction progresses through 2011, there might from time-to-time be minor modifications or "field design changes" made to the plans, but for the most part the project's design will be set as of December 5, 2008.



A Paseo Corridor Constructors worker places a portion of the 235 miles of rebar that will be used to construct the Christopher S. Bond River Bridge.

With the foundation work now done on the river bridge center pier, people will start to see the delta-shaped lower pylon structure rising out of the water as a series of concrete pours take place in the coming months.

Other ongoing river bridge work includes forming the five vertical columns for each of the five bridge bents that will help support the structure. Building each of these 25 columns involves drilling about 100 feet into the ground, forming and setting the metal rebar cage inside the shaft and pouring about 220-cubic yards of concrete.

While most of the river bridge work is occurring east of the existing highway corridor and is not impacting the traveling public, other construction activities associated with the highway improvements are more noticeable. Some of the ongoing and upcoming highway construction activities include:

- Highway widening work on the east side of the viaduct that spans the railroad tracks just north of Bedford Avenue. Work on the bridge abutment along Bedford requires closing the Bedford Avenue off-ramp from northbound I-29/35. **This off-ramp is scheduled to close the morning of Monday, Dec. 1** and will remain closed for about two years. During this time, motorists wanting to access the Paseo Industrial District will need to go north to 16th Avenue and re-enter the highway going south to the Levee Road exit.
- Widening to the outside of the southbound I-29/35 lanes between Front Street and Independence Avenue. This work will eventually require a short-term closure of the Independence Avenue loop ramp to westbound I-70. This closure, anticipated to last about 2 months, is tentatively planned for spring 2009.
- Retaining wall construction and drainage work between Levee Road and Bedford Avenue on the east side of the highway.
- Highway widening work on the east side of the viaduct that spans the railroad tracks just south of the Front Street interchange.
- Installation of sound wall panels on top of the retaining wall panels that are in place along the Armour Road off-ramp from northbound I-29/35.
- Construction of the bridge abutment on the north side of Armour Road for the new southbound highway viaduct.

Did You Know?

This project will move about 450,000 cubic yards of dirt for the highway widening. That's enough dirt to fill the Sprint Center's College Basketball Experience room to a depth of five feet more than 58 times.