City of Newark's Charles Emerson Bridge

The Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) announces that the awarded low-bid contractor Richard E. Pierson Construction Company, Inc. will begin construction of a new multi-use bridge over the White Clay Creek within the City of Newark. Efforts will occur on or about March 22, 2021. Completion is anticipated to be early-October 2021.



Rendering of Charles Emerson Bridge as seen to the upper left

This project also involves abutment, pathway approaches, and minor traffic signal timing and upgrades. The new bridge will be known as the Charles Emerson Bridge after the former Newark Park and Recreation Director who helped expand the Newark park and trail system. The structure will connect the Pomeroy and Newark Rail Trail to Curtis Paper Mill Park and make safer travel along Paper Mill Road for bicyclists, pedestrians and families. The bridge will be placed adjacent to Paper Mill Road as a separated facility from the current historic bridge.

The City of Newark is the project sponsor. In 2015 the project came to DelDOT from the City's Parks and Recreation Department with preparation and planning discussions even prior to this time. Costs for the construction, itself, exceeded just over one million dollars. Funding for the entire project effort was provided by the City of Newark, elected officials (Sen. Soloka, Rep. Baumbach), New Castle County (County Executive Meyer), University of Delaware, a grant secured under DNREC's Division of Parks for Outdoor Recreational Parks and Trail, the Federal Highway Administration, and DelDOT.

The project initiated by the City of Newark is part of a program known as the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). TAP is managed and administered on behalf of the sponsor and FHWA by DelDOT's Division of Planning. TAP projects and efforts are community based non-motorized projects first authorized by the metropolitan planning organization – i.e. WILMAPCO. The City of Newark will maintain and possess the bridge and other separated path efforts following construction.

During certain construction periods, motorists can experience the presence of flaggers that will temporarily control the travel lanes and flow. This will be limited and intermittent to allow for daily construction access and delivery of materials. However, it is expected that Papermill Road will only be closed for several days in August. The new prefabricated bridge structure needs to be delivered on-site and then placed by crane upon its new abutment foundations. Roadway detours will be posted and advance announcements alerting the traveling public will be made for this specific sequence.

The new bridge will be a single span approximately two hundred feet in length. Efforts were also taken to minimize and avoid direct impacts to the National Wild and Scenic River designation of the White Clay Creek. Constructability will also be a challenge, as the site is crisscrossed by overhead electric lines.

Further information or any construction updates may be seen at the city's presentation or by checking the DelDOT's Projects Portal and searching under White Clay Creek Bike/Ped Bridge.