

Missouri River Bridge Grand Opening Set

(KLZA)--Residents of Southeast Nebraska, Northwest Missouri, and Northeast Kansas are invited and encouraged to be in Rulo, Nebraska at 3 p.m., Sunday, September 1st for a Grand Opening

Celebration marking the opening of the new U.S. Highway 159 Bridge over the Missouri River. An official ribbon-cutting will take place near the River's midpoint following a short program held on the bridge's west approach.

Folding chairs and refreshments will be available for the convenience of those attending. Following the ribbon-cutting, civic leaders from the tri-state area will take part in a ceremonial motorcade crossing the bridge from west to east and returning again to its point of beginning before dispersing. After the motorcade has cleared the bridge, highway crews will complete painting of lane markings directing U.S. Highway 159 traffic onto the east and west approaches of the new bridge that replaces a structure that has spanned the river since its completion in November 1939.

Charlie Radatz and Beth Sickel, Co-Chairpersons of the Tri-State Corridor Alliance, urge everyone to take time during the Labor Day Weekend to join in the celebration. The Alliance was formed to lobby for the bridge in November 2007, shortly after hotel owner Mitch Glaeser challenged those attending a Falls City farmers and merchant's banquet to write letters asking their local elected officials to champion the need for a new, safer bridge.

Over 16-hundred letters were received. Area newspaper, radio, and television reporters were invited to a press conference during which Alliance members unveiled the letters and stressed the need for a new, wider and safer bridge on an expedited timeline. They then took their case to elected and appointed officials from the states of Nebraska, Missouri, and Kansas including a trip to Washington, D.C. Approval was won for planning and construction funding and a Groundbreaking Ceremony for the new bridge was held September 19th, 2010.

In an open letter to the public included in newspaper advertising, Radatz and Sickel said, "This new river span represents a 'bridge to a brighter future'. It is built to modern safety standards and will be key to future economic development of our region."

The new \$25.7 million bridge employed many workers and resulted in many dollars being spent by workers and contractors at local businesses. It took just under three years to complete, and it is being opened to traffic one year sooner than construction was originally scheduled to begin.

Said Radatz, "Each person and organization that wrote a letter in support of the new bridge and each public official who assisted this effort in any way deserves great praise for their contribution to this effort, and we hope all who did so will take time to join in celebrating their accomplishments."

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