

New Rulo Bridge Dedicated

(KTNC) - Three years of construction came to an end Sunday, when the ribbon was cut on the new U.S. Highway 159 Bridge over the Missouri River at Rulo.

Several hundred people gathered on the west approach to the new bridge for the hour-long ceremony Sunday afternoon, culminating with a ribbon cutting and a ceremonial caravan of vehicles across the bridge.

Nebraska Lieutenant Governor Lavon Heidemann was the keynote speaker. He was the First District State Senator when lobbying for the new bridge kicked into high gear in 2007.

Lobbying for the new bridge was led by the Tri-State Corridor Alliance, a coalition of citizens from Nebraska, Missouri and Kansas. Their lobbying efforts included a visit to elected representatives in Washington, D.C. The lobbying effort also included a massive letter writing campaign, in which people were asked to write a letter to public officials explaining the need for the new bridge. The letter writing campaign was the brainchild of Mitch Glaeser, the owner of the Grand Weaver Hotel in Falls City.

Ground was broken for the new bridge on September 19, 2010. Flooding over the past three years delayed completion of the bridge by approximately one year. Total cost of the new steel and concreted structure, which includes a 2,400-foot span across the river and approaches on the Missouri and Nebraska sides of the river, amounts to \$25.7-million.

Charlie Radatz, the co-chair of the Tri-State Corridor Alliance, says the main advantage of the new bridge is safety for those crossing the Missouri River.

The old Rulo Bridge was built by the Works Progress Administration 75 years ago and was dedicated on December 19, 1939. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1993. It's been featured in the movie "Paper Moon" and the BBC series "Stephen Fry in America."

As the fourth and final phase of the project, the Nebraska Department of Roads will let bids in September to demolish the old bridge.