Passaic County to Replace Century-Old Bridge
by Brian Jecker, PE, Senior Associate for Dewberry

Passaic County is moving forward with plans to replace the Fair Lawn Avenue Bridge crossing the Passaic River. The bridge serves as an important connection between the City of Paterson in Passaic County and the Borough of Fair Lawn in Bergen County. The existing structure is 109 years old and considered structurally deficient and functionally obsolete.

The bridge carries approximately 9,500 vehicles each day and connects Fair Lawn Avenue in Fair Lawn with Route 20 in Paterson. Trucks and busses have been prohibited from using the bridge for the past 15 years due to concerns about vehicle loads.

Also known as the Fifth Avenue Bridge due to its proximity in Fifth Avenue in Paterson, the Fair Lawn Avenue Bridge was built in 1905, and was originally designed to carry pedestrians and horse-drawn carriages. The two-lane, 270-foot bridge will be demolished and a wider two-span, continuous, welded plate girder superstructure and new abutments and center pier will be constructed in its place. The new bridge will enable cars to turn more easily onto Route 20, and will include a six-foot sidewalk on the north side. The superstructure will be designed so that the lowest point of the bridge will not impact the hydraulics of the river.

Passaic County is working with the engineering firm of Dewberry on the design of the bridge. Preliminary plans are underway, with final design expected by the end of 2015. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2016 and be complete in 2018. The project is estimated to cost approximately $13 million and is being funded with federal appropriations.

“The new bridge will enable vehicles, including trucks and busses, to travel more easily between Paterson and Fair Lawn,” says Passaic County Engineer Steven Edmond. “The existing bridge has served its useful life and is past the point of continuing repairs. The new structure will serve these communities well for many years to come.”

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