

Alert on the new Hill-to-Hill bridge!

The Bethlehem Gadfly Uncategorized January 9, 2019

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Gadfly:

One of the big unspoken issues facing the city is the renovation and/or replacement of the Hill-to-Hill Bridge. It's a big line item in the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study and rumor has it that the engineering firm which handled the renovation of the Fahy has the contract. A right-to-know request to PennDOT led me nowhere in confirming that. The rumor is that the firm has taken office space in one of the NIZ properties in Allentown.

In a casual discussion last year with some low-level city employees on the day that the Lehigh University contract baker died on the H-t-H, tying up traffic for hours, I learned that St. Luke's wants a temporary bridge in place during the renovation. They are a huge economic engine, employer, and service provider for the region and access to their Fountain Hill campus from the northside cannot be impeded.

Combining the idea of "temporary span" with the existing span's renovation leads me to think that we're going to get a two-span solution, with the new span just east of the existing bridge. They'll tie together into the existing Spur Route 378 at the north bank of the Lehigh just south of my residence on Conestoga Street.

All indications point to a divided highway with sufficient lanes to ensure the smooth flow of traffic onto the Spur Route and some improvement on the south bank of the river.

Why a new span on the east side of the existing bridge? There's a minimum of eminent domain needed there. Fritch would need to lose the coal silos (though I hope the sign gets moved and not destroyed). If construction were to the west of the H-t-H, we'd lose many townhouses and condos on Lehigh and Spring Streets and have a likely negative impact on the Armory project.

We need transparency here from the city and from PennDOT. We're only a couple of years away from the beginning of construction. Lehigh County Northsiders need to begin planning and negotiating so we get a safe new river crossing and fair treatment of city residents.

John