Written by Ivan Phifer
Monday, 05 November 2012 12:12

After two years of detours and construction, Oct. 27 marked the day of connection between the north and northeast sections of Minneapolis.

"We have waited for this day for a long time," said Mike Opat, chair of Hennepin County Board of Commissioners.

The Lowry Avenue Bridge is an important transportation corridor and neighborhood connection in Minneapolis. Hennepin County started the design process for bridge replacement in 2007. The previous Lowry Avenue Bridge was closed in 2008 due to structural issues and demolished in June, 2009.

Businesses that have been affected by the project include River Garden, River Liquor Store, and Hoover Wheel Alignment.

"I want to thank the people of North and Northeast Minneapolis over the years," said Dist. 2 Commissioner Mark Stenglein.
Stenglein also stated that with the design of the bridge, it also has environmental benefits.

"There are things you do not see, such as a water retention tank that collects acres of rainwater from northeast to cleanse the water before it goes into the river," said Stenglein. "Think of the great bridges of the world – the Golden Gate Bridge, the Brooklyn Bridge – they are pieces of transportation infrastructure, but they are also once-in-a-century statements about our future, engineering models and connecting parts of our community."

In honor of the opening and completion of the bridge, high school marching bands from Patrick Henry High School and Edison High School performed.

Senator Amy Klobuchar said the I-35 bridge collapse was the catalyst for analyzing the condition of other bridges in the state, as well as the country.

"One of the things we found out about the Lowry Bridge was that it had structural problems and (was) structurally deficient. People have been saying for years it needed to be rebuilt," said Klobuchar.

On the Federal level, then Senator Norm Coleman, Congressmen Keith Ellison and Klobuchar worked to secure the initial project funding.

"A lot of the work was done on the county, state and local basis," said Klobuchar.

Ellison elaborated on why teamwork, especially projects like these, is imperative for a successful outcome.

"Multiple levels of government, the private sector and you (the community) came together as citizens to invest in infrastructure. I'm proud of it," said Ellison.

Ellison believes projects such as the Lowry Avenue Bridge will help rebuild the country and communities. "If we build bridges like this one all over the nation, we can put America back to work and improve the productivity of our country. We have a responsibility to the next generation to build bridges like this one," said Ellison.

State Senator Linda Higgins said the bridge would unify once separated communities in the north and northeast sections.

"There once was a time when people said North and Northeast did not mix," said Higgins. "Anyone who has spent time on the Broadway Bridge knows we are growing together. We are neighbors, co-workers and we are now bridge builders too."

For more information regarding the bridge and commuting, contact Paul Backer, Hennepin County Construction Project Engineer at (612) 282-1714 or visit www.lowryavenuebridge.com/Default.aspx.