

# courier-journal.com

## Big Four Bridge conversion about to start

Written by

Sheldon S. Shafer

9:46 PM, Jul. 2, 2011

A ceremony is scheduled Wednesday afternoon at the Big Four Bridge to mark the long-awaited start of construction on converting the old railroad bridge into a promenade for walkers and bicyclists across the Ohio River.

The 2:30 p.m. event, on the circular deck at the bridge's south end, will include Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear, Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer and U.S. Rep. John Yarmuth.

It will be the first time the public has been allowed up the spiral ramp to the deck, which together provide access to the bridge at Waterfront Park. The \$6.8 million ramp was completed last year, and it won't be open again until the bridge's conversion is finished, officials said.

After nearly two decades of discussion and planning, work is beginning on "a project that has easily been the most-anticipated component of the park," said David Karem, executive director of the Waterfront Development Corp. The agency oversees the park for the city and is coordinating the

Big Four's conversion.

Kentucky and Indiana officials announced in February that they had found the funding to convert the bridge. The 2010 Kentucky legislature approved \$12 million for the Kentucky portion of the project. And Indiana is in line to get \$8 million in federal aid from Hoosier highway officials that will be matched with \$2 million from a taxing district in Jeffersonville to pay for the access and approach on the Indiana side.

Jeffersonville Mayor Tom Galligan said the Indiana connection probably will be completed in early 2013, while the Kentucky portion is to be finished by the end of next year.

Karem said that if the Kentucky portion is completed first, the Kentucky access will be opened up while the bridge remains closed at the north end.

Galligan said the completed project "will be a great boost to both economies. People will be able to enjoy a stroll across the

Advertisement



COMING SOON!

# hatching deals daily

50-90% off local dining, shopping, and more

Sign up now at [DealChicken.com](http://DealChicken.com)

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics

# courier-journal.com

bridge. I think it will get a lot of use and it will be a lot safer than (walking across) the Second Street Bridge. And it will offer a beautiful view."

Galligan noted that the Big Four project will tie into the planned store-lined canal development in downtown Jeffersonville.

Louisville metro government recently awarded a contract for \$1.29 million to T&C Contracting to remove hundreds of old Big Four railroad ties, many of them rotten or scorched from a fire in the 1990s.

The contract also calls for replacing or repairing some steel plating and rivets in the bridge structure. A trolley system, which waterfront officials describe as a "rolling dumpster," will move the ties to a crane that will lower them to the ground on the Kentucky shore.

Two other contracts for the Kentucky portion of the project will be awarded soon, said Mike Kimmel, the waterfront agency's deputy director.

One will be to repair four of the bridge's six limestone piers.

The last contract will be for the major decking work. The deck, made primarily of steel and concrete, will be 22 to 24 feet wide, with 4-foot-high railings on both sides. Plans call for a center lane intended for use by bicycles.

Karem said that when the project is completed, access to the bridge will be

allowed 24 hours a day. He said it would be impractical to close off access part of the day, because the ramp begins only a few feet from River Road.

Karem said the bridge probably will be closed only for Thunder Over Louisville.

The Big Four, which opened in 1895, was named after the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago and St. Louis Railway Co., known as the Big Four. The last train crossed and the approaches were dismantled in the 1960s.

The bridge was long owned by the Bridge the Gap Inc. charity and was lighted at the holidays. The city acquired the bridge through condemnation several years ago.

Reporter Sheldon S. Shafer can be reached at (502) 582-7089.


## Related Links

Bridges authority to meet Thursday in Jeffersonville

Advertisement



COMING SOON!  
**hatching deals daily**  
50-90% off local dining, shopping, and more  
Sign up now at [DealChicken.com](http://DealChicken.com)

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

# courier-journal.com

Second bridges project meeting attracts 250 in Louisville

Anti-toll comments draw biggest cheers at bridges meeting

Humana co-founder David A. Jones invites civic leaders to meeting to stop bridges lawsuit

Pro-bridges film draws criticism from anti-tolls group, others

New hearings set on bridges: Public asked for comments

Advisory group gets look at possible tolls and scaled-back bridges plan

Public Ohio River Bridges Project meetings scheduled for last week of June

Newsmaker: Paul Fetter | Clarksville businessman focused on bridge tolls fight

Ohio River Bridges Project savings could total \$1.2 billion, officials say

With Spaghetti Junction not shifting, what's next for Butchertown?

Advertisement



COMING SOON!

# hatching deals daily

50-90% off local dining, shopping, and more

Sign up now at [DealChicken.com](http://DealChicken.com)

Print Powered By 