

# Bridge to go full circle: a return to foot traffic

## New one-lane span to carry Haworth cars

By RICHARD COWEN  
STAFF WRITER

### HAWORTH

Because the Ivy Avenue Bridge has only one lane and is made entirely of wood, you might think it was built for a horse and buggy.

Wrong. Try horses, cows, and sheep.

Long before the first automobile sputtered its way across the wooden planks that span what is now the West Shore Railroad tracks, there was a farmer named Phyfe and his livestock, simply trying to make their way back to the barn after the animals spent the day grazing in the fields nearby.

The farmer and his flock are long gone, their fields replaced by neat rows of houses, where the finely trimmed lawns and asphalt driveways form the geometry of suburbia. Somehow, the Ivy Avenue Bridge has remained all these years, in all its single-lane, antiquated, and rickety grandeur, although the hoofbeats have been replaced by the steady hum of an estimated 4,500 cars a week.

On Wednesday, state Department of Transportation Commissioner Jamie Fox ushered in a new era for the 117-year-old bridge. He came to Haworth to present borough officials with a \$750,000 check, the state's contribution to a plan to convert the splintered span into a pedestrian walkway and build another single-lane bridge for cars right next to it.

Bergen County is expected to contribute the rest of the funding for the project, which is esti-



A horse and buggy and a pedestrian crossing the bridge in the old days. The bridge will revert to the use of pedestrians.

mated to cost \$1.36 million.

Fox noted that there are more than 6,000 bridges in New Jersey. The Ivy Avenue Bridge, he said, is one of the 14 percent of bridges in the state that have been inspected and deemed structurally deficient.

"Just like we need to invest in our schools, we need to invest in our infrastructure," Fox said.

Haworth Mayor John Dean DeRienzo said that the plan is to restore the wooden bridge so that it can be used by pedestrians, joggers, and bicycle riders. A prefabricated steel bridge will be erected next to it.

DeRienzo said the new bridge will also be a single lane structure, which means traffic will be able to flow only in one direction at a time. A traffic light will be installed in order to control the flow, he said.

DeRienzo acknowledged that building a two-lane bridge might better accommodate the flow of traffic. But that might ruin the neighborhood, he said. "Too much traffic," he said.

DeRienzo said that all the architectural designs are done. The project will go out to bid toward the end of summer and should be completed by winter, he said.

The original cattle crossing that became the Ivy Avenue Bridge is believed to have been built in 1885 by the New York West Shore and Buffalo Railway Co.

The Phyfe family donated some of the land for the railroad, in exchange for a promise that a cattle crossing be built over the tracks.

That cattle crossing eventually evolved into the plywood planks and wooden trusses that came to be known as the Ivy Avenue Bridge.

At only 10 feet wide and 106 feet long, the bridge is too narrow to handle anything but one-way traffic.

Because it's so small, motorists often meet grille to grille in the middle of the bridge.

When that happens, one motorist has to back off. Sometimes, tempers flare.

"I know there have been occasions when the police have had to be called to the bridge when one motorist was too stubborn to back off," said Mary Lou Boyd, the Haworth borough historian.

"That's OK, I think it makes people better neighbors," said Councilwoman Betsy Foster.



PETER MONSEES/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The Ivy Avenue Bridge has seen a number of grille-to-grille confrontations resolved by the police.

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## Haddon Twp. gets state grant

By EILEEN SULLIVAN  
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HADDON TWP.

Red brick sidewalks, ornamental lighting, wooden benches, trees and decorative trash cans will come to Haddon Avenue.

Wednesday, state Transportation Commissioner James P. Fox presented a \$300,000 check to the township for streetscape improvements between Cuthbert Boulevard and Albertson Avenue.

Township officials said this was the first major step in revitalizing the downtown area.

"Of course I'm happy," said Tuyet Huynh, who owns Lovely Nails, a nail salon on the portion of the road that will directly benefit from the grant.

"It's the rebirth, as far as I'm concerned," township Commissioner Walt Eife said.

Long-term plans call for streetscape improvements all the way down Haddon Avenue, said the township's economic development consultant, Lou Bezich of Public Solutions. This \$300,000 will go toward the first of four phases in the revitalization.

"This money we bring here today ... actually helps the mayor and the commissioners entice further development and brings people back to the town," Fox said.

Earlier this summer, the township had passed an ordinance that will assess certain businesses an additional 25 cents per \$100 of assessed property value to fund business

district improvements.

The state grant will provide an additional boost, officials and business owners say.

The grant is one of several positive developments, says Mayor Bill Park. The township is close to signing an agreement with a developer who wants to buy the dilapidated Westmont Theatre, Park said. The developer plans to restore the historic theater's facade and open four restaurants inside.

Sen. John D. Adler and Assemblyman Louis Greenwald, both D-Camden, worked with township officials to get the grant money.

"If we're going to grow as a state, we're going to have to regrow our older communities like Haddon Township," Adler said.

Fox, originally from Union County, said he had fond memories of time spent in Haddon Township 25 years ago. Then a college student at Villanova University, Fox would visit his roommate, John Donnelly, who was from the township.

"It was always a very nice town," Fox recalled. "This is still a town that is well kept and people take pride in it."

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