

City Gets \$19 Million For Bloomfield Span

By EILEEN FOLEY
Post-Gazette Staff Writer

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That amount represents 80 percent of the estimated \$24.5 million cost of demolition, engineering, design and construction of the new bridge and access routes on both the Bigelow Boulevard and Liberty Avenue sides. The city's capital bond fund will pay the balance.

"Needless to say we are very pleased," said Mayor Caliguiri, who has been lobbying for nearly two years for

more federal bridge money both as mayor and as vice-chairman of the Transportation Committee in the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

The grant to Pittsburgh is the first given nationally by the Federal Highway Administration from a \$200 million Discretionary Bridge Replacement Fund set up under the Surface Transportation Act of 1978. Of \$700 million in additional bridge funds available under the act, Pennsylvania will receive \$36 million for bridges, and Mayor Caliguiri is hopeful Pittsburgh will get its share of that as well.

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Funds Ensure Bloomfield Getting Bridge

(Continued from Page 1)

by the city's Washington lobbyist, Jeff Parker, said Caliguiri, who was in the nation's capital last week lobbying for the money, with help from U.S. Rep. William Moorhead.

According to Moorhead, Caliguiri learned six weeks ago that the city and state might be overlooked when the discretionary bridge funds were allocated.

"He sent his team to Washington and I got on the phone with the highest officials at the highway administration and the Department of Transportation. A combination of quick action by his staff and a little political muscle applied in the right places led to the approval of the bridge funds," Moorhead said.

Moorhead and Caliguiri have scheduled a press conference at 10 a.m. today at the Liberty Avenue end of the Bloomfield Bridge, which was closed last year to vehicular traffic after inspection disclosed loose I-beams mid-span and deterioration of two base sections.

The 65-year-old span is built of the same steel and in nearly the same design as the ill-fated Silver Bridge in West Virginia, which collapsed nearly 11 years ago killing 46 people.

"We will get \$2.8 million this year and will begin demolition in April," Caliguiri said. "Demolition will be completed in 1980, but construction can start while it is going on. We intend to start in 1980 and complete the new bridge in the fall of 1981, so we have chopped a year and a half off first estimates of construction time."

Caliguiri said he had argued to highway administration officials that the Bloomfield Bridge is a major span in the Pittsburgh area and that he felt it was the best place for them to put their money first.

U.S. Puts \$19.6 Million In Bloomfield Span Pot

The Federal Highway Administration has given Pittsburgh's bridge problem a much-needed shot in the arm by granting the city \$19.6 million to tear down and replace the 65-year-old Bloomfield Bridge.

Mayor Richard Caliguiri, in announcing receipt of the funds, said last night the money amounts to 80 percent of the \$24.5 million needed to demolish the span, design, engineer and build the new one, and construct access routes on Liberty Avenue and Bigelow Boulevard.

The other \$4.9 million is expected to come from the city's capital bond fund.

"I'm very thrilled this money is coming our way," Caliguiri said.

Caliguiri, who for two years has lobbied for more federal money to repair or replace some of the 128 city-maintained bridges, said the grant is the first given nationally from the Federal Highway Administration's \$200 million Discretionary Bridge Replacement Fund.

The fund is part of a \$900-million pot of bridge repair money set up under the Surface Transportation Act of last year.

Pennsylvania is expected to get an additional \$36 million under the act and the mayor of this "City of Bridges" hopes to get some of that, too.

Caliguiri credits a team of his representatives which went to Washington last week — Pittsburgh's Washington lobbyist Jeff Parker and U.S. Rep. William Moorhead, D-Pittsburgh — with shaking the money loose from Department of Transportation officials.

A little more than \$2 million will come to the city this year with demolition of the structure slated to begin in April, Caliguiri said. The span has been closed since last May 15.

He said construction will start next January, with completion projected for autumn, 1981.

"We've chopped a year and a half off our first estimates," the mayor added.

New Bloomfield Span a Certainty As U.S. Gives City \$19.6 Million

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up under the Surface Transportation Act of 1978. Of \$700 million in additional bridge funds available under the act, Pennsylvania will receive \$36 million for bridges.

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Bridge Plan Delights Residents of Bloomfield

By EILEEN FOLEY
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The bleak Bloomfield Bridge, dark and gloomy since its closing last year, was the site of a low-key celebration yesterday.

Government officials and Bloomfield and Polish Hill residents gathered at the bridge's barricades off Liberty Avenue on the Bloomfield side. It was snowing and they shivered. But they smiled at hearing the news that, with \$19.6 million in federal help, a new bridge will be in place by 1981.

"We were just delighted," said Debbie Davis, president of a Polish Hill citizens group. "We are especially pleased that no more than one family, and maybe not even that, will have to be relocated."

Frank DeShantz and Felix Cocco of the Bloomfield Citizens Council and the Rev. Dom Olivieri of Immaculate Conception Church in Bloomfield also were all smiles over the city's good fortune. The closed bridge has been "a heart-ache," Cocco said.

Mayor Richard Caliguiri and Rep. William Moorhead, noses and ears reddened by the cold, were awash in mutual admiration, with the mayor congratulating Moorhead for his political clout and Moorhead praising Caliguiri and his staff for "perspicacity and ingenuity" in winning the first award from the Federal Highway Administration's \$200 million discretionary bridge fund.

The award was symbolic, said Caliguiri, noting that Pittsburgh is known as the City of Bridges, and that its officials have led the national fight to put bridge reconstruction money into the federal budget.

City Public Works Director Jack Ruff was there too. He told of plans for the three-arch structure, which will resemble the new Murray Avenue Bridge but

may be built of concrete rather than steel.

Ruff is partial to the Murray Avenue span. "I look at it like I look at Gina Lollobrigida," he said.

"We want it (the Bloomfield Bridge) to look nice. We don't want an old, drab bridge," Caliguiri said.

A major interchange will be built at the Bigelow Boulevard end, Ruff said,

with a single, two-phase traffic signal replacing the three-phase light now there. On-off ramps to bypass the light will keep traffic moving. The new bridge will be slightly wider than the present span and will carry four lanes of traffic.

On the Liberty Avenue side a lane will be built for a right turn off the bridge. A double lane for right turns onto it also will be constructed.

Ruff said some business houses on Bigelow Boulevard may be relocated and affected businessmen are willing to move. "As far as houses are concerned," he said, "we are trying not to move anything, but one house is 25 feet from where the piles must be driven and it is impossible to drive them that close and not do damage, even if we moved the bridge 10 feet."



Mayor Caliguiri, left, and U.S. Rep. William Moorhead discuss plans for new Bloomfield Bridge.

JAMES KLINGENSMITH/Post-Gazette

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Bloomfield and the Bridge Gap

It's good news that a federal grant will make possible an earlier-than-expected replacement of the Bloomfield Bridge. But the federal rescue effort also dramatizes the scarcity of available resources for bridge restoration and repair.

With help from U.S. Rep. William Moorhead of Pittsburgh, the Caliguiri administration obtained \$19.6 million from the new \$200 million Discretionary Bridge Replacement Fund established under the Surface Transportation Act of 1978. The money comes from the Federal Highway Trust Fund, formed in 1956 to finance construction of interstate highways and funded by the 4-cent federal gasoline tax and other highway user taxes.

The \$19.6 million will furnish 80 percent of the estimated \$24.5 million cost of the demolition of the present bridge and the engineering, design and construction of a new structure. The other 20 percent will come from city bond funds — which otherwise likely would have had to bear the entire cost.

For a city with numerous bridges out of commission, the other good news of the federal grant is the significant push it gives to early action on the Bloomfield project. When it closed the bridge last May, the Caliguiri administration said that it would be shut down for five years. Later, after an outcry of disbelief, city officials said the procedure might be telescoped to three or four years.

Thanks to the federal grant, demolition can begin in April. But construction will be started while it is going on — carrying out a suggestion that the city overlap its timetables, rather than running them sequentially. In that way, city officials believe, the bridge can be completed by the fall of 1981, a year and a half earlier than the original spring-of-1983 estimate.

The federal grant to Pittsburgh for the

But for those with long memories in highway matters it marks yet another deviation from the original pristine concept of the Federal Highway Trust Fund established by Congress in the Eisenhower administration to build the vast interstate highway system.

The money was supposed to go solely for national-interest, interconnected defense highways. In the late 1960s there were recurring battles over whether the fund should be "invaded" to provide money for mass transit and other non-highway construction uses. Although the goal of completing the interstate system remains, the once sacred Highway Trust Fund now is being parceled out increasingly to meet state and local needs, including urban systems.

The 1978 Congress established a \$4.2 billion special bridge fund to be spent over a four-year period. This year \$700 million will be divided among the 50 states, with Pennsylvania getting \$36 million. Another \$200 million this year — and each of the next three — has been placed in a Discretionary Bridge Replacement Fund. It is this fund which was tapped for the Bloomfield project.

Those worried about the growth of federal spending and the intrusion of the federal government into local affairs presumably should be concerned about grants such as the one for an intracity structure like the Bloomfield Bridge. But the burgeoning bridge problem and the lack of any major source of help other than Washington will override such scruples with most people.

When one notes that the Bloomfield project took the equivalent of 55 percent of the money allocated for all of Pennsylvania from the special bridge fund, one can realize the magnitude of the problem and