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## **Pennsylvania's Rapid Bridge Repair Project Shows Promising Early Results.**

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's (PennDOT) public-private partnership with Plenary Walsh Keystone Partners to repair 558 of the state's rural bridges over three years is moving along at a brisk clip.

Plenary Walsh is designing, financing, replacing and maintaining the project through a 25-year agreement. The consortium is funding the work upfront and will be repaid in six installments once it meets specific project benchmarks.

Thus far, the project is moving quickly, in part because many of the bridges have similar design features. As a result, the contractors can rely on one of three basic designs and use prefabricated parts that can be altered to suit each site, officials at PennDOT and Plenary Walsh Keystone Partners said.

"Due to the similar designs, many of the bridges can be built in 75 days from closing the old one to opening the new one. For example, 496 bridges are less than 100 feet long and builders know they will use about 2,900 pre-stressed concrete beams on 417 of them over the life of the contract," the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reported Nov. 9.

"For the most part, a lot of the parts are interchangeable. It allows you to work faster once you get used to working with them," Plenary Walsh's public information manager, Dan Galvin, told the newspaper.

The ability to move small crews of workers efficiently from one site to another also expedites the process. Most crews consist of four to 12 workers and can shift among projects quickly if one incurs delays. Plenary Walsh has about 250 people working on the P3 throughout the state in addition to subcontractors who are rebuilding some of the bridges.

PennDOT also worked to expedite the project launch by preparing to obtain environmental and other necessary approvals for the first 87 bridges to be repaired quickly after the developer was selected, which could allow Plenary Walsh to replace many of those that need major repair or are vital to their communities in year one. Several bridges already have been repaired in as little as one to two months, project blog entries indicate.

Other counties and municipalities in the state are inquiring about this P3's approach to bridge repair, which PennDOT is considering using for other projects.

"At PennDOT, we're in the bridge-building business. The counties and local municipalities aren't, so something like this might be attractive to them," said Michael Bonini, director for the PennDOT Office of Public-Private Partnerships.

Although pleased with the progress Plenary Walsh has made to date, he hopes the pace of construction will move even faster during the next two years.

“We’re hoping there is some learning that goes on this year that leads to running even more smoothly in the future,” Bonini said.

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