



Clearing Hurdles, CONTRACTOR STYLE

Despite inclement weather and tight work windows, RailWorks is on track to help SEPTA complete an ambitious \$567 million reconstruction project

More than four years after the planning and site work began for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority's (SEPTA) Market Street Reconstruction project in Philadelphia, the end is finally in sight for rail contractor RailWorks Track Systems Inc.

"We've been out there in the rain and the sleet and the snow, and all kinds of weather to get the job done," says Bill King, the New Jersey-based area manager overseeing the job for RailWorks. "We were the first contractor on the project, and we'll be the last."

In addition to inclement weather, workers have had to contend with tight work windows and balancing the needs of different contractors. Even so, RailWorks is on schedule to help SEPTA finish one of its most ambitious reconstruction projects by late 2008.

The \$567 million reconstruction effort was launched in 2003 with the aim of rebuilding five rail stations and more than 16,000 linear feet of track on the transit system's elevated portion. RailWorks was

awarded two separate contracts worth \$17.1 million. The \$10.9 million Guideway project called for removing existing track and installing 12,000 linear feet of new direct fixation track and contact rail, as well as two double crossovers.

EXECUTING THE GAME PLAN

For the \$6.2 million Cobbs Creek Completion project, RailWorks is installing 2,100 linear feet of direct fixation track and contact rail, and removing and renewing 2,200 linear feet of ballasted track and contact rail.

Complicating the process is a limited weekend construction window, which requires building temporary towers — as well as temporary fastening of six track bridges — until a section can be permanently completed.

"It's a lengthy process to get a section done," says Robert Munn, the RailWorks superintendent on the job. "It's especially hard when you're doing both tracks at once."

RailWorks recently put the brakes on

the Guideway project for the winter season with about 70 percent of the work done. The tough part is coming up this spring. That's when work will be done on both the Guideway and Cobbs Creek segments simultaneously, King says.

During a planned nine-day system outage, RailWorks will demolish existing track and replace it with 648 feet of direct fixation track on the Cobbs Creek section, while doing the same with 1,350 track feet at Guideway. During a second outage — this time, it'll be 16 days — 1,872 track feet will be similarly demolished and replaced at Guideway, while 1,180 feet of direct fixation track and 1,000 track feet of ballasted track will be demolished and replaced at Cobbs Creek.

"Carrying out this magnitude of work in so brief a period of time will require RailWorks to have a very well thought-out work plan and near flawless execution of that plan," King says. "This task is made somewhat more difficult due to the fact [we] work for a different general contractor in each section."

In addition to the extended outages, RailWorks will utilize planned weekend outages in much the same way it has so far, Munn says. Such challenges are nothing new for RailWorks, which worked in similar fashion on a SEPTA project on the Philadelphia's east side.

Another project twist is its location: elevated track in a busy commercial and residential area.

"You've got people living and working there less than 30 feet away," Munn says. "There's a lot to work around."

But the RailWorks team wouldn't have it any other way.

"We're not surprised when something comes up. We know how to handle it," King says. "We've always completed what we've needed to be completed on time." ■

— By Robert J. Derocher

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Progressive Railroading
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