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**REPLACEMENT OF JACKSON AVENUE RAMPS**

**TO BEGIN BY LATE SUMMER, BE COMPLETE BY FALL 2020**

Two structurally deficient Jackson Avenue ramps connecting to Gay Street in the Old City are being replaced.

Construction for the $10.1 million overall project is expected to get underway in August or September 2019. Knoxville City Council on Tuesday authorized Mayor Madeline Rogero’s administration to execute an agreement with Bell & Associates Construction for up to $6.5 million. Earlier costs included design work and right-of-way acquisition.

The 100-year-old ramps will be demolished and replaced, reusing the red cobblestone-like bricks. The new ramps are expected to reopen in fall 2020.

While the ramps are being replaced, there will be no through traffic on that section of Jackson Avenue between Broadway and Central Street. Access will be maintained to area businesses and to the City’s parking lot on West Jackson Avenue, although a third (64 of 186) of the parking spaces in that lot will be unavailable during the construction. Motorists wishing to park in the lot will need to turn onto West Jackson from Broadway.

East-west pedestrian access through the construction zone on Jackson Avenue will be maintained during the project.

To access Gay Street from Jackson, or vice versa, pedestrians should use a metal staircase at the southern end of the Gay Street Viaduct, across from the Emporium Center. This is the colorful staircase that the Downtown Knoxville Alliance (formerly the Central Business Improvement District) had covered with a mural.

Traffic on Gay Street overhead will not be affected by the construction.

The cost of the ramp replacement is being split three ways. The federal government is the largest contributor – $8.1 million. The state’s investment is $1.75 million, and the City is funding $274,200.

When the ramps reopen, more than $19 million will have been invested in this section of downtown/the Old City. That includes major investments in the 100 block of Gay Street, Jackson Avenue streetscape upgrades, and the purchase of the McClung Warehouses site and the Jackson Avenue parking lot.

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