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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Simpson County Welcome Center Closing Jan. 2 for Demolition and  
Reconstruction**

*Estimated project completion in fall 2020*

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 1, 2020)** – Today, state agencies announced the Simpson County Welcome Center, built in 1974 and located at the zero mile marker on I-65 in southern Kentucky, is closing Jan. 2 for demolition and reconstruction with the new facility expected to be completed in the fall of 2020.

The center has not received any major upgrades in over four decades and has required frequent minor repairs and maintenance. Rebuilding the center will bring it into ADA compliance, increase safety features, add more bathrooms and improve vending amenities. Also, high mast lighting for ramps and parking areas will be added as well as more commercial truck parking.

“Additional commercial truck parking will provide a safer alternative to parking along ramps or shoulders due to limited spaces,” said Jim Gray, secretary of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. “Improving the condition of this welcome center ensures travelers have a safe and positive experience when crossing through the Commonwealth.”

Holly McCoy-Johnson, secretary of the Finance and Administration Cabinet said, “Our welcome centers are often the first impression travelers have of our beautiful state and we want to ensure they are safe and accessible to all our visitors.”

Once complete, the new Simpson County Welcome Center will be similar to the rest areas in Hart County on I-65. It will feature horse statues, fences, improved signage and TV screens in the lobby to showcase many of Kentucky’s tourist attractions.

Currently, employees with the Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet staff the Simpson County Welcome Center. These employees will work in other area Tourism facilities while construction is underway.

Churchill McGee LLC of Lexington has been awarded the design-build contract for the nearly \$4.4 million project, which will be funded with 80% federal funds and a 20% state match. Federal Transportation Enhancement (TE) funding can be used for reconstruction/construction of tourist welcome centers, not standard rest areas.

During construction, digital signs will advise the general public of the closure, as well as indicate limited access for commercial trucks. There are multiple exits in Kentucky and Tennessee within a 3-mile area with access to restaurants, gas stations and other amenities.

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