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# U of M to build three pedestrian crossings over railroad tracks

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The University of Memphis has reached an agreement with Norfolk Southern Corp. to build three pedestrian crosswalks across the Southern Avenue railroad tracks.

The U of M has started construction on a \$1.6 million effort to build pedestrian crossings across the railroad tracks that divide the university's main campus from its recreation center, alumni offices and surface parking.

Gerry Keen, the campus planning and design construction representative for the project, said the crosswalks are a cooperative effort with Norfolk Southern, which owns the right of way over the tracks.

"They are very happy to have better control over this crossing," Keen said. "They see the benefit 100 percent."



COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

The University of Memphis is underway on a project that will fence off the Southern Avenue railroad tracks and direct pedestrian traffic to three ADA compliant crosswalks over the Southern Norfolk railway.

Keen said this is the first time that the university has been able to work through the “jurisdictional issues” of getting approval from the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT), Norfolk Southern and the City of Memphis to build the crossings.

“We are very close to having all of our t's crossed and i's dotted,” Keen said.

The project will result in a crosswalk at Houston Street, one at Goodman Street and a third linking the main campus to a large surface parking lot. The three crossings will be heavily landscaped with stairs and include an ADA compliant ramp.

The project also includes a fence that will run the length of the tracks, preventing students, faculty and staff from illegally crossing the tracks. The fence will funnel pedestrians to one of the three crosswalks.

“We’re hoping [the fence] will keep students and faculty off the tracks,” Keen said. “It should be a real improvement to students, faculty and the community at large, who pass through this area. Nothing is 100 percent, but we’re trying to get as close to 100 percent as possible when it comes to keeping people safe.”

The crosswalks include a series of gates that separate the public from the tracks. Keen said the gates do not lock when a train is passing and they are not power operated, but the crosswalk will feature signals and flashing lights for when trains approach. The gates will also swing out from the tracks in the event someone gets trapped within the gates when a train is approaching.

A TDOT grant is funding 80 percent of the \$1.6 million project. The rest is being covered by the university’s campus fund, Keen said.

Later in the summer, the City of Memphis will begin work on storm sewers that will accommodate the university’s future expansion along Southern Avenue, including a \$62 million Recreation Center and an \$18 million land bridge over the railroad tracks.

While the pedestrian crossing is a separate effort from the land bridge, the two projects are complimentary, Keen said.

The city’s sewer project will result in a temporary, partial closure of Southern Avenue later this summer.

Engineering firm Allen & Hoshall is working with landscape architects Ritchie Smith Associates on the design of the pedestrian crossing project. The general contractor is Zellner Construction.

Norfolk Southern has already started construction on the railroad. The university anticipates the crosswalk project to be completed by the fall semester.



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