



Times staff / PETER A. ZINNER

Darby Borough will now own and maintain this bridge that once shuttled SEPTA trolleys across Darby Creek. Once scheduled to be torn down, the county has earmarked \$57,000 of federal stimulus money to renovate it.

# Historic Darby bridge saved from demolition

■ County agrees to pay \$57,000 to rehabilitate crossing built in 1904.

By LAURA WISELEY

Times Correspondent

**DARBY** — Thanks to a last-minute reprieve from Delaware County Council, one of the county's most distinctive bridges will stand in the borough for at least a little while longer.

Built in 1904, the "Trolley Bridge" at Ninth and Main streets had been slated for demolition as part of the Darby Transportation Center's rehabilitation project.

In a letter to Darby Borough Manager Mark Possenti, John E. Pickett, director of the Delaware County Planning Department, wrote that county council has agreed to pay for the bridge's rehabilitation, providing Darby Borough foots the bill for any "routine maintenance in connection with the bridge's use for non-vehicular traffic."

Possenti read the letter at Wednesday night's monthly council meeting, drawing cheers from a group of supporters who had come to plead with council to spare the bridge.

"It's a humble bridge. It reflects Darby itself," resident Vincent

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VINCENT REYNOLDS

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Reynolds told council prior to Possenti's announcement. "Never again will we have another bridge like that. To lose it, to destroy it, would be a shame."

Council unanimously passed a resolution to accept ownership of the bridge from SEPTA and to perform routine maintenance on the structure in the years to come.

Delaware County will provide \$57,000 for rehabilitation work for the bridge, including cleaning and painting the structure, installing a pedestrian railing, strengthening deteriorated floor beams, spot pointing the abutments, and adding a slip-resistant surface to the steel decking, Pickett wrote.

The project will be funded with federal stimulus money, according to

borough Engineer Eileen Mulvena.

The project will also include installing markers along the bridge to give pedestrians a chance to learn about important events in the borough's history. Darby's historical committee will meet this month to determine which events will earn recognition along the walkway.

Since the borough's inception, Darby has been a transportation hub in Delaware County. The trolley bridge, a Warren Pony-Truss structure, shuttled trolleys across Darby Creek from 1904 until 1932.

The bridge has been closed to vehicular traffic, and will continue to be used only for pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

"Imagine the millions of people who came across that bridge through the years," Reynolds said. "What were they looking for? What goals did they have? What were they going to do? That bridge connected people, and it's a shame that more attention hasn't been paid to it."

John Haigis, of the borough's historical society, praised county council's decision.

"Things are happening in Darby that are very exciting, and the bridge is a bit part of that," he said. "Darby's day has finally come."