

CHESTER BRIDGE

Frequently Asked Questions



The Chester Bridge, originally constructed in 1942, has two 11-foot lanes and carries 7,000 vehicles per day. It connects the cities of Chester, Illinois and Perryville, Missouri across the Mississippi River via Highway 51. MoDOT has a proposed project to rehabilitate and paint the Chester Bridge over the Mississippi River on Route 51 in Perry County. The proposed contract would begin in late summer 2021 with an anticipated completion of fall 2022.

> IS THE CHESTER BRIDGE SAFE FOR TRAVEL?

The bridge is safe for travel and is inspected every year. If it were deemed unsafe for travel, MoDOT would immediately close the bridge. By scheduling the proposed rehabilitation project prior to the replacement project, the work would focus on reducing the probability of future weight restrictions or a complete closure.

> WHY SPEND MONEY TO REHAB THE CURRENT BRIDGE WHEN A REPLACEMENT BRIDGE IS BEING PLANNED?

MoDOT strives to be a good steward of taxpayers' dollars. In addition to consideration of the cost of the rehabilitation and replacement projects, MoDOT must also consider the economic impact to businesses if the current bridge were load posted or completely closed.

The improvements would preserve the condition of the current bridge, in an effort to mitigate future restrictions between now and the

time of the opening of a new bridge. Weight restrictions allow passenger vehicles to pass but essentially close the bridge to commercial motor vehicle traffic, which makes up nearly 25% of all travel. Commercial motor vehicles would have to take the 100-mile detour around the restriction, which takes about one hour and 45 minutes.

Missouri does not have funding secured for a replacement project at this time. If funding does not become available, additional repairs may be necessary in the future. Funds have been secured for the proposed 2021 rehabilitation project.

> HOW WILL THE REHAB AND REPLACEMENT PROJECTS BE FUNDED?

Illinois and Missouri will share the cost of both projects. The estimated cost of the rehabilitation project is nearly \$10 million. The replacement cost is approximately \$140 million.

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> COULD THE NEW BRIDGE BE A TOLL BRIDGE, AS IT HAD BEEN IN THE PAST?

While MoDOT has explored tolling in the past, specifically for I-70, it is not a consideration for funding the Chester Bridge project. Missouri and Illinois cannot simply institute a toll road/bridge. The process involves special designation to institute a toll along with legislation.

> ONCE THE PROJECT IS UNDERWAY, WILL FARM IMPLEMENTS BE ABLE TO CROSS THE BRIDGE?

The temporary concrete barrier would reduce the bridge to one-lane traffic with a 10-foot width restriction. Standard vehicles, such as semi-trucks hauling grain would be able to cross, but wide equipment such as combines would not be able to cross. A temporary traffic signal would be in place to guide motorists through the work zone.

Local law enforcement estimates escorting 400 wide load vehicles across the bridge each year. Those vehicles would not be able to cross the bridge throughout the project. Unfortunately, due to the proposed repairs, impacts to planting and harvest seasons are unavoidable.

> WHY WILL A CONCRETE BARRIER BE PLACED ON THE BRIDGE DURING WORK?

The number and type of repairs required for this contract are more extensive than the repairs that have been completed to date. These repairs consist of removing part of the deck, including the curb and metal guardrail. During this time, contractors would make necessary repairs to the steel under the deck to mitigate corrosion issues. The temporary concrete barrier would be in place to protect the workers from traffic entering the work zone and to keep motorists in the driving lane.

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> CAN THE CONCRETE BARRIER BE REMOVED DURING THE REHAB PROJECT?

Once the project is underway, the concrete barrier would remain in place until the winter months. At that time, the barrier would be removed, to allow MoDOT to plow snow on the bridge in the event of winter weather. The contractor may use channelizers to limit traffic to one lane.

> HOW MANY TIMES WOULD THE BRIDGE CLOSE FOR NIGHT AND WEEKEND WORK?

At present, we estimate that the bridge would close overnight 12 times throughout the duration of the project. Additionally, the bridge would close two weekends during repairs.

> WHEN WEEKEND AND NIGHT CLOSURES OCCUR, WHERE WOULD MOTORISTS CROSS THE RIVER?

During closures, motorists would need to cross the Mississippi River by utilizing the Bill Emerson Memorial Bridge on Route 74 in Cape Girardeau or the Jefferson Barracks Bridge on I-255 in St. Louis.

> HOW DO I STAY UP-TO-DATE ON PROGRESS, CLOSURES AND THE PLAN FOR A NEW BRIDGE?

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> WHO CAN I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION?

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