



OVER THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER | Issue 2, December 2017

CHAIN OF ROCKS BRIDGE NEWSLETTER

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION | REGION FIVE | DISTRICT 8

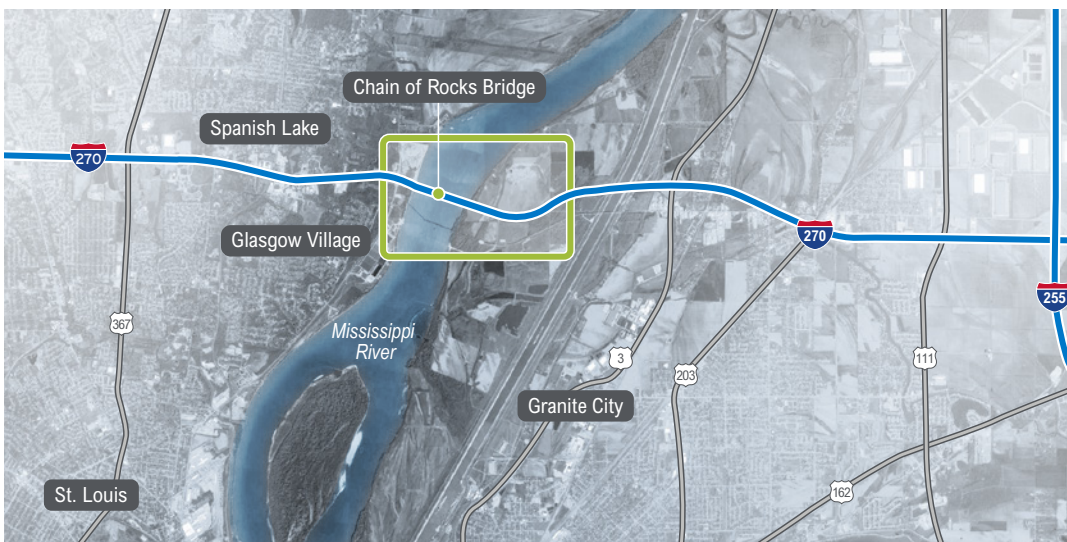


Jeffrey Keim,
Region 5 Engineer

I am pleased to announce that IDOT, in cooperation with MoDOT, is wrapping up the first phase of engineering for this very important project, and the best replacement option for the Chain of Rocks Bridge has been identified. The completion of this study will allow the project to move into the design phase and, ultimately, into construction once funding is available. The Chain of Rocks Bridge is a vital link for both regional and interstate traffic. I would like to thank everyone who has helped make this first phase of the Chain of Rocks Bridge replacement project a success. I am looking forward to this project moving to the next phase, and I hope that your interest in this project continues.

IDOT's PROJECT STUDY NEARING COMPLETION

The Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) Preliminary Engineering & Environmental study to replace the Chain of Rocks Bridge that carries I-270 over the Mississippi River connecting Madison County, IL, and St. Louis is coming to a close. The two-year study has resulted in a recommendation of the replacement of the existing bridge. Due to the new alignment of the proposed structure, Missouri's Riverview Drive Interchange will be improved as well. The final step of the study process will be approval of the IDOT's Phase 1 Project Report by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) scheduled for spring 2018. **The proposed improvements will be shown to the public at a Public Meeting in early 2018.**



Study Area (outlined in green)

The study area is just west of the Riverview Drive interchange in St. Louis, MO and extends east to just west of the Chain of Rocks Canal Bridge in Madison County, IL.

WHY IS THE PROJECT NEEDED?

AGE AND CONDITION

The existing I-270 bridge over the Mississippi River, locally known as the Chain of Rocks Bridge, was constructed in 1966, making the bridge over 50 years old. This has resulted in rising maintenance costs. As recently as 2011, IDOT spent \$7 million on maintenance repairs on the aging structure.

SAFETY

The current 1-foot shoulders allow virtually no room for disabled vehicles without blocking a lane or maneuvers to avoid crashes. The results of having narrow shoulders and high traffic volumes can be seen in the crashes experienced along the corridor. In the most recent five-year period studied, 181 crashes occurred on I-270 within the project limits. In addition, IDOT has deemed this portion of roadway as a “5 percent selected segment,” meaning this location ranks in the top 5 percent in terms of most severe safety needs compared to other similar roadways in Illinois.

LIMITED CAPACITY

The structure carries four lanes of traffic, two in each direction. This structure has seen a significant increase in traffic from an average daily traffic (ADT) of 19,800 vehicles per day in 1975, to over 51,000 vehicles per day today, with approximately 17 percent of these trips being truck traffic. The traffic is projected to increase to 56,900 vehicles per day by 2030. With the increasing growth in traffic along the I-270 corridor, the bridge will need the ability to expand the number of lanes to meet future demands. With the narrow shoulders, there is no room left for the addition of future lanes within the footprint of the current bridge.

WHAT DID THE PROJECT STUDY ACCOMPLISH?

- Identified a preferred bridge replacement alternative
- Identified any environmental concerns with the proposed bridge replacement
- Identified right of way requirements
- Provided the basis for IDOT to proceed to Phase 2 of the project, which includes Contract Plan Preparation and Land Acquisition

ABOUT THE ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT & PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE SELECTION PROCESS

During the alternative development process, IDOT studied a range of replacement options for the bridge and the potential effects of those alternatives. Many factors were considered during this process, which ultimately led to the preferred alternative selection. Factors considered included, but not limited to, were: environmental resources, soil stability, public input, surrounding land use, river elevation, long-term traffic needs, crash history and engineering feasibility.

A key determining factor for the selection of the preferred alternative was the Riverview Drive interchange in Missouri. The Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) has recently completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) study for the widening of I-270 from I-70 to the Chain of Rocks Bridge. As part of the MoDOT EA study, modifications to the Riverview Drive interchange were investigated to determine how a modified interchange would “fit” with the widening of I-270. In coordination with MoDOT, IDOT was able to determine the most feasible alignment for the new Chain of Rocks bridge that works best with the Riverview Drive interchange configuration approved in the MoDOT EA study.



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

As part of the continued Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process, IDOT has met with many local and regional stakeholders to keep them updated on the study and to address any concerns with the project. Stakeholders have included environmental regulatory agencies, local elected officials, and park and recreational districts.

At the beginning of the study, a Community Advisory Group (CAG) was formed to help identify issues important to the public. During the October 2016 CAG meeting, members raised several important issues including but not limited to: maintaining the surrounding area for recreational purposes, reducing traffic congestion, and keeping the bridge open during construction as it is important regionally and nationally for the movement of goods and services. IDOT took these comments and created a project problem statement (see sidebar) and also took them into consideration and incorporated measures to address these issues into the preferred bridge replacement alternative. There will be a final CAG meeting this winter to gain input as the project heads into the design phase.

At the public meeting held in June 2016, the most common concerns were that the bridge is too narrow (not enough lanes for traffic and not wide enough shoulders for emergency stopping) and that the bridge needs to remain open during construction. These comments were similar to the concerns stated at the CAG meeting. This public input was taken into consideration during the alternative development and preferred alternative selection process. Working with MoDOT and other local and regional stakeholders, CAG members, and listening to the public has led to the selection of a bridge replacement alternative that will address these key issues and concerns.

A second public meeting will be held this winter to illustrate the preferred alternative and answer any questions regarding the study and its next steps. Please look for the informational notice about this meeting. Postcards will be mailed to those on the project mailing list and flyers will be distributed in local businesses to inform you of the meeting.

WHAT IS CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS (CSS)?

CSS is a public involvement program that uses a collaborative approach and involves many stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits into its surroundings and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources while maintaining safety and mobility.



To view the public meeting displays, please visit the Get Involved section of the project website: www.idot.illinois.gov/projects/i-270-over-the-mississippi-river

More information on CSS and how to provide your input to the study can be found in the Get Involved section of the project website:

www.idot.illinois.gov/projects/i-270-over-the-mississippi-river

For more information on IDOT's CSS process, please visit the following website at:

www.idot.illinois.gov/transportation-system/transportation-management/context-sensitive-solutions/index



WHAT IS A PROBLEM STATEMENT?

A problem statement identifies the problems with a project study area that need to be addressed.

WHAT IS THE CHAIN OF ROCKS PROBLEM STATEMENT?

“The existing bridge carrying I-270 over the Mississippi River connecting Illinois and Missouri is aging and in need of continual repairs. There is a need to provide a sustainable, long-term solution that increases safety, accommodates future traffic growth, and provides for the continued movement of regional and national goods and services while preserving the environmental, recreational and economic viability within the project area.”

PROJECT FUNDING

THE PROJECT PROCESS



Funding for contract plan preparation and land acquisition (Phase 2) has been identified in the Department's Fiscal Year 2018–2023 Proposed Highway Improvement Program. Funding for construction (Phase 3) is not currently included in the Department's Multiyear Program but will be considered in future programs based on fund availability and project readiness.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The study to replace the Chain of Rocks Bridge is coming to a close. A public meeting is anticipated for the beginning of 2018. This will be an opportunity for the public to see exhibits showing the new bridge design along with associated improvements to the Riverview interchange. The final step of the study will be the approval of the Project Report which is scheduled for Spring 2018. After this report is approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), IDOT can proceed to Phase 2 of the project, which includes contract plan preparation and land acquisition. This phase can take approximately 18 to 24 months. If funding for construction becomes available, construction could begin after the completion of Phase 2.

STAY INFORMED

There are multiple opportunities to stay informed:



- ✔ Visit the study website at: www.idot.illinois.gov/projects/i-270-over-the-mississippi-river
- ✔ Join the mailing list
- ✔ Submit comments
- ✔ Attend a public meeting

Would you like to be added to our mailing list to receive this newsletter and other notifications related to this study? If so, you can sign up on the project website at: www.idot.illinois.gov/projects/i-270-over-the-mississippi-river, or mail or email the following information to:

I-270 PROJECT TEAM

c/o Horner & Shifrin Inc.
604 Pierce Blvd., Suite 300
O'Fallon, IL 62269
Email: bljacquot@hornersshifrin.com

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Please check this box if you would like to receive mailings by email instead of standard mail.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Will the new bridge be six lanes and have wider shoulders?

Wider shoulders than what is currently on the Chain of Rocks Bridge will be provided. The new bridge is proposed to accommodate six 12-foot lanes and include 12-foot shoulders. Currently, I-270 is four lanes in Illinois and Missouri adjacent to the bridge. MoDOT has completed a study to widen I-270 to six lanes and IDOT has an ongoing I-270 six-lane study. Therefore, the new bridge will be striped for four lanes initially but will be constructed to handle six lanes of traffic in the future when I-270 is widened.

Will the bridge be closed during construction?

It is IDOT's goal to keep two lanes in each direction open to traffic while the new bridge is constructed.

Are bicycle and pedestrian accommodations planned on the structure?

Bicycle and pedestrian accommodations for the new bridge were investigated, and it was determined that these accommodations would not be provided. There is an existing dedicated bike and pedestrian route just south of the existing Chain of the Rocks Bridge on the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge crossing the Mississippi River.



CONTACT INFORMATION | Send comments or questions to:

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