

newsletter

McKinley Bridge Preservation Project

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A Message from the Regional Engineer



Carrie Nelson, P.E.
Region 5 Engineer

In 2025, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) initiated Phase I Engineering Services for the McKinley Bridge Preservation Project. This project focuses on preserving and extending the service life of the historic McKinley Bridge, which connects Illinois and Missouri across the Mississippi River.

The McKinley Bridge is as an important transportation link for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists traveling between the City of St. Louis and communities throughout the Metro East region. More than 13,000 vehicles cross the bridge each day, making it a critical regional connection.

Through this preservation project, IDOT is working to extend the life of this historic structure while ensuring it continues to safely serve travelers for generations to come. We encourage you to get involved, stay connected, and share your own memories and stories as we work to preserve this iconic bridge.



A Historic Mississippi River Crossing

For more than a century, the McKinley Bridge has connected communities and supported commerce throughout the St. Louis region. Originally opened in 1910, the bridge was constructed by the Illinois Traction System and designed to carry both railroad and vehicular traffic across the Mississippi River. At the time, it represented a major engineering achievement and provided a vital connection between the growing communities on both sides of the river.

The bridge is named after William B. McKinley, a prominent businessman and executive of the Illinois Traction System who played a key role in its development. Contrary to popular belief, the bridge was not named after President William McKinley.

In 1926, the McKinley Bridge became part of the original alignment of U.S. Route 66, earning a place in American transportation history. Thousands of travelers crossed the bridge as they journeyed between the Midwest and the western United States during the early years of the nation's highway system.

Over the decades, the bridge supported industrial growth, freight movement, and daily commuting throughout the St. Louis metropolitan area. As transportation needs evolved, railroad service was eventually discontinued, and the bridge transitioned primarily to vehicular traffic.

By the early 2000s, the aging structure required significant rehabilitation. The bridge closed in 2001, and ownership was transferred to the State of Illinois in 2003. A major rehabilitation effort began shortly thereafter, including extensive structural improvements and the addition of a dedicated bicycle and pedestrian pathway through a partnership with Great Rivers Greenway. (Continued, page 2)



Photo Credit:
Image in circle:
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

A Historic Mississippi River Crossing (Continued)



Photo Credit:

Image above: St. Louis Post-Dispatch

The bridge reopened to motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians in 2007, restoring a critical transportation connection between Illinois and Missouri. Today, it continues to carry more than 13,000 vehicles each day while serving as both an important transportation facility and a historic landmark.

As the bridge approaches its 120th anniversary, the current preservation project will help ensure this historic structure remains a safe and reliable crossing for future generations.

Why Improvements Are Needed

The McKinley Bridge remains one of the most important transportation connections between Illinois and Missouri. Every day, thousands of motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians rely on the bridge to travel between communities, access employment, and reach destinations throughout the St. Louis metropolitan region.

Although the bridge underwent a major rehabilitation and reopened in 2007, transportation infrastructure requires ongoing maintenance and preservation to remain safe, reliable, and cost-effective. Exposure to weather, temperature changes, traffic loads, and normal wear and tear gradually affects bridge components over time.

The purpose of the McKinley Bridge Preservation Project is to identify preventative maintenance improvements that will extend the life of the bridge and protect the investment made during its previous rehabilitation. By addressing maintenance needs now, the project can reduce the need for more extensive and costly repairs in the future while minimizing disruptions to the traveling public.

This effort reflects IDOT's commitment to maintaining critical transportation infrastructure and ensuring that the McKinley Bridge continues to serve the region for decades to come.

Overall Project Schedule

The McKinley Bridge Preservation Project will be completed in multiple phases designed to evaluate the existing condition of the bridge, develop appropriate preservation strategies, and prepare for future construction activities. The project is now entering Phase II, which includes:

- Development of final roadway and structural plans
- Traffic control strategies
- Detour planning
- Preparation of construction documents

Anticipated Improvements

Expansion joint replacement, bridge deck patching, installation of a new deck overlay, structural steel cleaning and painting, and minor structural steel and bridge support repairs.

Public Involvement

Public participation is an important part of this project. Throughout the process, there will be opportunities to stay informed and engaged through public meetings, newsletters, project updates, and online engagement opportunities.

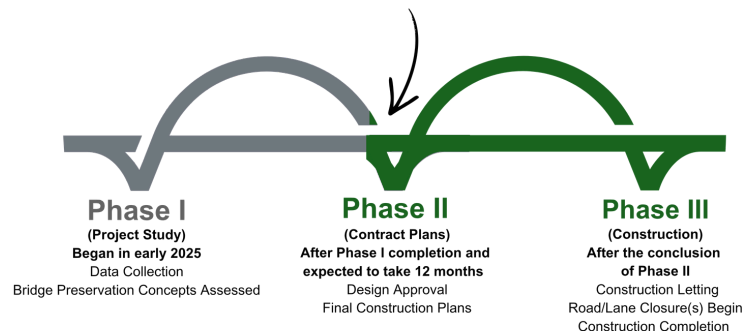
We encourage you to stay connected by exploring the project website, signing up for project updates, and sharing your thoughts and stories about the McKinley Bridge as we work together to preserve this historic landmark.



Upcoming Public Meeting/ Open House:

Our first Public Meeting/Open House is yet to be scheduled. However, it is being planned for late summer/early fall 2026.

We are Here



IDOT Contact Information:

Brandon Humphreys, P.E., Civil Engineer IV
618-346-3413

✉ brandon.humphreys@illinois.gov
🌐 <https://idot.illinois.gov/programs-and-projects/featured-projects/madison-county---mckinley-bridge-over-the-mississippi-river.html>

