



Welcome to the December 2021 update of the US 51 Bridge Project

Your continued support and interest in the US 51 Bridge Replacement Project are appreciated. Despite COVID-19 and all the ramifications of it, work continues to progress steadily on this project.

Historical Perspective

1938, a new car cost \$763, and a gallon of gas was 10 cents. In November of that year, the Cairo Ohio River Toll Bridge was constructed. The 83-year old cantilevered bridge (known as the US 51 Bridge) was rehabilitated in 1979. Over the years, it has undergone maintenance and extensive repairs, often requiring lane closures and sometimes complete bridge shutdowns. The US 51 Bridge is the longest in Kentucky and is the westernmost crossing on the Ohio River.



Since 2013, planning work has been underway to evaluate the aging bridge and develop, consider and identify a long-term, cost-effective solution to maintain regional mobility and connectivity between Illinois and Kentucky. The planning phase was completed in 2018.

Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Analysis Phase

Over the past two years, the project study team has continued to work with resource agencies and the public to further develop and evaluate alternatives and environmental impacts. A Community Advisory and Environmental Justice Group (CAG/EJ) provides input and shares project information with local constituencies. Engineers and project designers have used environmental constraints and public input to avoid and minimize socio-economic, historical, and cultural resources and property impacts, including area farmland. Complex environmental impacts to related water resources, including floodplain and floodway, continue to be essential factors given the project's location near the juncture of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.

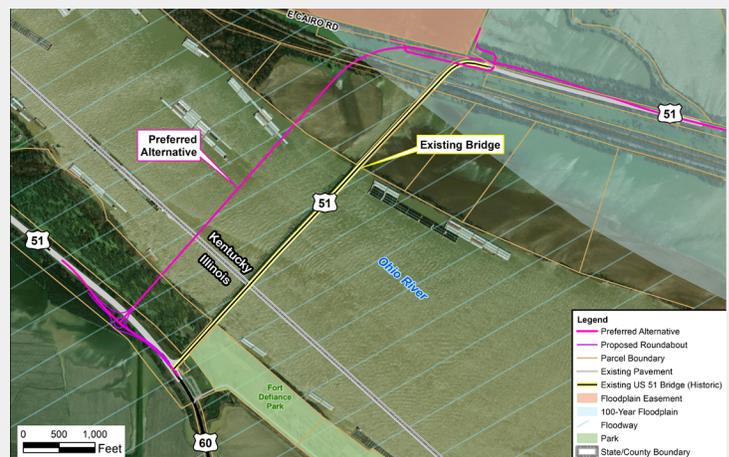
The preliminary engineering and environmental analysis process have concluded that rehabilitation or future use of the existing US 51 Bridge does not meet the purpose and need of the project. However, the current bridge is a historic resource; therefore, additional coordination is required under the National Historic Preservation Act regarding the future of the existing bridge.

Identification of the Preferred Alternative

The project study team has identified the Preferred Alternative for the project and the required environmental documentation and necessary approvals will be completed in early 2021.

“The project team evaluated feasible and cost-effective bridge alternatives during the past several years to improve bridge safety, functionality, and travel reliability. After public engagement and consideration, the team and the public concur that the preferred option is to build a new bridge 980 feet upstream with new roadway connections and with a roundabout on the Cairo side,” says Chris Kuntz, Project Development Branch Manager for the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet.

The new two-lane bridge will be 1.94 miles long, and the roadway improvements will provide access to Cairo and Wickliffe. The Preferred Alternative protects parkland, minimizes floodplain impacts and improves safety and traffic flow. The new bridge also includes 8-foot shoulders to better accommodate bicycle and pedestrian movements. The Preferred Alternative will require a new right-of-way. However, no residential, business or community resource displacements or relocations are anticipated. Impacts to community facilities, parks or protected lands have been avoided and minimized to the extent practical.



There will be impacts associated with property acquisition, including permitted mooring locations. Generally, the economic impacts of the preferred alternative are positive in that new bridge, and roadway improvements will provide a safe and reliable connection for decades to come and continue to facilitate critical river navigation. *(continued)*

Identification of the Preferred Alternative ..continued

The project team collaborated with the Seaman Church Institute in Paducah, Kentucky, to evaluate river navigation and comply with US Coast Guard regulations. Additional coordination with the US Coast Guard will continue into the next phase of the project.

Due to the historic nature of the existing bridge, the project team engaged State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) in Illinois and Kentucky and other consulting parties under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. This process ensures the existing bridge is appropriately considered as a historic resource, during the project development process. The process also evaluates impacts and mitigation, as appropriate. After the construction of the new bridge is complete and open for traffic, the existing bridge will be removed.

Removal of the bridge is considered an ‘adverse effect’ that requires additional coordination and the identification of mitigation measures. Some of the mitigation includes state-level documentation package including digital photos and original construction plans to fully develop the Kentucky Historic Resource Individual Survey Form. The bridge plates will also be scanned and included in the documentation package. A marketing plan to encourage potential ‘re-use’ by moving all or part of the bridge to another location will also be prepared and executed. If an appropriate re-use plan or partner is not realized, alternative mitigation options are also included. The MOA will remain in effect for five (5) years. Additional updates will be provided in future project newsletters.

The Existing Bridge Now and Through Construction



While construction of the new bridge is many years away, it is important to note that the existing bridge will continue to be maintained and repaired as needed. And the bridge will remain open while the new bridge is under construction.

Maintenance and repair activities may require short-term lane restriction and, possibly, full closures at times. The public will be kept well informed as to these needs. Depending on several factors, including getting appropriate federal and state funding, construction could begin in 2026- 2027. Construction is expected to take 3-5 years.

Critical Phase Nearing Completion

We are pleased to report the preliminary engineering and environmental analysis of the US 51 Bridge Replacement project is wrapping up this winter,” says Kuntz. “We will then move toward the final design and land acquisition over the next two to three years.”

Additional details, including a graphic on the Preferred Alternative and the Public Involvement history, are available here: <https://us51bridge.com/public-involvement>

Public Outreach and Engagement

“We will continue to build on the project’s extensive public outreach and engagement”, says Aaron Stover, Vice President and Great Lakes Bridge Lead for Michael Baker International, the project contractor. “We will regularly update the project website during the design phase and upload project documents for the public’s review. A public information session is planned to share the results of the Bridge Type Study and roadway designs in Illinois and Kentucky. Project newsletters such as this will be provided at intervals throughout the project to share milestones, schedule and funding updates.” If you are interested in learning more about the project, please contact US51bridge@mbakerintl.com or call [1.800.922.7591](tel:18009227591).



What’s Next: Final Engineering Design and Land Acquisition

The Project’s next phase, Final Engineering, Design, and Land Acquisition will be completed in approximately 24-36 months. Detailed engineering, hydraulic analysis and river dynamics will be further evaluated, and seismic analysis will be completed. Preliminary permitting activities and some land acquisitions will begin.

Please help us by sharing this information and update with your family, friends, and interested members of the public.

Also, we are sharing this update via our social media outreach:

 <https://us51bridge.com>

 <https://www.facebook.com/KYTCDistrict1>

 <https://twitter.com/kytcdistrict1>

If you are interested in learning more about the US 51 Bridge Replacement project or would like to comment on the project, please contact us.

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