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Tentative dates announced for upcoming closure and slide of Milton-Madison Bridge

Closure of the Milton-Madison Bridge is tentatively scheduled to occur Friday, March 14 at 12:01 a.m. with all lanes shut down until Friday, March 21 at approximately noon. Traffic will be reduced to one lane beginning at 9:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 13, in order to move equipment into place. During this time, a flagger will allow traffic in each direction to pass. **Inclement weather and other factors could alter the schedule.**

During the closure, a historic event will take place as the new half-mile bridge becomes the longest bridge in North America, and likely the world, to be slid laterally into place.

Motorists relying on the U.S. 421 bridge connecting Madison, Ind., and Milton, Ky., will be rerouted to one of two other bridges – the Markland Locks and Dam Bridge on Kentucky Route 1039 and Indiana State Road 101, 26 miles upstream, or the Kennedy Bridge on Interstate 65 in Louisville, 46 miles downstream.

During the closure, a ferry will transport emergency medical vehicles across the river between the Milton boat ramp near Ferry St. and the temporary Ferry St. landing in Madison. Residents are asked to keep these areas clear to allow access for emergency vehicles if necessary. The Milton boat ramp will be closed to the public during the closure.

“We recognize this is an inconvenience for those who rely on the bridge and cross it frequently. However, we have worked diligently to make sure the closure is short and that people in the community with medical emergencies are taken care of,” said Kevin Hetrick, project manager for the Indiana Department of Transportation. “One of the reasons Walsh Construction was chosen to build the bridge is that its plan allowed the bridge to stay open during construction for all but 10 days, while it was originally expected to be closed for a year.”

Once the bridge closes, preparations for the slide begin. Depending on how long the prep work takes, the slide is expected to begin within a few hours of the bridge’s closure. Once underway, the slide could take up to 16 hours before the bridge rests in its final location – on top of the refurbished piers that held the old Milton-Madison Bridge in place beginning in 1929. During the slide, the Coast Guard will close the river.

The new bridge currently sits atop temporary piers. To reach its new home, it will slide 55 feet. While pulling 30 million pounds of steel and concrete that distance in a matter of hours is an engineering marvel, it’s also a somewhat simple process.

Tentative Schedule:

- Thursday, March 13, 9:00 p.m., one lane of traffic closed, one lane open (flagger directing traffic in both directions)
- Friday, March 14, 12:01 a.m., bridge closes for approximately one week
- Friday, March 14, slide begins of the 2,428-foot bridge
- Friday, March 21, noon, bridge open to traffic

This schedule is tentative and may be altered due to weather conditions and other factors.

Polished steel sliding plates are secured on top of the refurbished piers. Steel cables and hydraulic jacks controlled by computers will be used to pull the bridge. Eight jacks are mounted on the piers. Industrial lubrication will be put



on the slide plates to grease the skids. Then, through a series of grabs and pulls, the bridge will be slid into place. Each grab and pull is expected to move the bridge 20–22 inches – up to 10 feet per hour.

Once the bridge is in its final position, work begins to secure it, which involves welding and bolting it in place. Reconnecting the driving surfaces requires most of the working days during the seven-day closure. Installing expansion joints, pouring concrete, configuring drainage and re-striping will take the remainder of the closure.

All schedules are tentative because weather and other factors can alter plans. “We’ll need a stretch of relatively good weather leading up to March 14 to keep everything on track, and a favorable weather forecast for the seven days of closure. Snow, rain and lightning can hamper our efforts,” according to Dav Kessinger, project manager for the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. “We’re also doing something that’s never been done before – pulling a half-mile bridge weighing 30 million pounds across 55 feet. Our top priority is safety. So, we will move at a pace that is safe.”

If all goes as planned, the bridge will reopen to traffic by noon on Friday, March 21.

The new steel truss bridge is 2,428-feet long and 40-feet wide with two 12-foot lanes and eight-foot shoulders – twice as wide as the old bridge. A five-foot-wide cantilevered sidewalk will be added to the structure in the coming months after the slide.

The Milton-Madison Bridge Project – a joint effort between the Indiana Department of Transportation and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet – has received numerous awards. It was named one of the top 10 bridge projects in the country by *Roads & Bridges* magazine, received a 2012 Best of What’s New Award from *Popular Science* magazine and received several state and national engineering awards for innovation. For more information, visit MiltonMadisonBridge.com or follow the project on [Twitter](https://twitter.com).

