



COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
TRANSPORTATION CABINET
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Transportation Cabinet Expediting Removal of Closed Broadway Bridge in Frankfort to Ensure Public Safety and Take Steps to Reopen River Traffic

Kentucky River, part of River View Park remains closed at bridge

FRANKFORT, KY. (Aug. 8, 2024) —The Kentucky River in Frankfort and part of River View Park at the old Broadway Bridge remain closed as a safety precaution while the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet works to expedite the removal of the aging structure, which has been closed to vehicles and pedestrians since 1993, to eliminate hazards to boat and pedestrian traffic.

Earlier this week, sidewalk and railing debris fell from the bridge, prompting immediate action from Transportation Cabinet crews who inspected the structure and began working with the City of Frankfort and the U.S. Coast Guard on measures to ensure public safety.

“Safety is our number one priority, and we are moving quickly to eliminate hazards over the waterway and park so they can reopen,” said Transportation Secretary Jim Gray. “At the same time, demolition will include measures to preserve the historic steel truss for reuse while we continue to work with the city on its future pedestrian crossing project.”

At the cabinet’s request, the U.S. Coast Guard has established a temporary safety zone at Kentucky River mile markers 65.5 to 66, restricting all vessels from traveling under the structure until Sept. 6. The Transportation Cabinet will also install warning buoys.

The City of Frankfort has placed safety fencing and signs to block the walking trail and areas near the bridge at River View Park.

Currently, state highway engineers are expediting a demolition project to remove the bridge’s approach spans near the shoreline and the main truss span over the river.

A more exact timeline for that work is expected within the next two weeks, with a target of issuing a shortened advertisement period for contractors soon.

Engineers investigated short-term methods to alleviate safety concerns and reopen waterway traffic, such as adding nets or removing loose debris, but those are not safe or feasible options because of the bridge's deteriorated condition.

Preliminary demolition plans include removing the bridge spans on the city side first to reopen the river to boat traffic – it primarily serves recreational vessels and a few commercial tour boats – and restore park access. Then, the steel superstructure would be taken down carefully so as much as possible can be reused in the future pedestrian crossing project.

“We are actively collaborating with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, the Kentucky River Authority, and the U.S. Coast Guard to minimize the impact of the river closure on our community, with a strong emphasis on public safety,” said Frankfort Mayor Layne Wilkerson. “The City of Frankfort and the Commonwealth of Kentucky have an agreement in place to address the future of the Broadway Bridge. We appreciate everyone's patience and understanding as we work to execute that plan.”

Broadway Bridge Conversion Project

The City of Frankfort has been actively working with the Transportation Cabinet to explore a solution that would create a rehabilitated pedestrian crossing at Broadway Bridge on new piers and would also incorporate the historic steel truss span of the existing structure. The State Highway Plan signed by Gov. Andy Beshear in April 2022 provided \$3.5 million for the construction of the new crossing. The city agreed in November 2022 to allocate up to \$2 million for this work.

Engineering and environmental studies began, and a public meeting was held in November 2023. A preliminary line and grade meeting took place in December where engineers identified the preliminary preferred alternative – building a pedestrian crossing slightly downstream that would incorporate the steel superstructure of the old bridge, which was the alternative favored by the public – and discussed next steps in the project schedule.

This spring, the city applied for \$1.7 million in federal Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant funds to help move the project forward.

Work continues to progress on federal environmental documents and other steps, with the goal to start construction on the project next year as funding allows.

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