



Historic Preservation Options for The Route 66 Meramec River Bridge

What is the current situation with the Route 66 Meramec River Bridge?

The Route 66 Meramec River Bridge, between the Route 66 State Park visitor's center and the park, was closed in fall 2009 due to safety. The Missouri Department of Transportation owns the bridge over the Meramec River, which formerly carried about 400 cars a day between the center and the park. Time has taken its toll on the bridge, and MoDOT has made the decision that the department cannot invest the money needed to maintain the bridge, as many other major bridges around the region, with higher traffic volumes, continue to need maintenance. MoDOT is going through the historic preservation process, as required by law, to determine if another group or agency will be willing to accept ownership and the liability and costs for maintaining the Route 66 Meramec River Bridge, also known as the Route 66 State Park Bridge. If the department is unable to find a new owner, the department must remove the bridge for the safety of people on the Meramec River. If the bridge is not removed in the next several years, it could collapse under its own weight.

Why can't MoDOT fix the bridge?

The short answer is that it really isn't a good use of taxpayer money. The bridge carried about 400 cars per day and only serves the park. It would cost between \$10 million to \$15 million to make the bridge safe for vehicles. MoDOT has over 10,000 bridges across the state that require maintenance. In this economy, especially, the best use of taxpayer money is to spend our limited funds on bridges that serve communities around the state.

What options does MoDOT have?

MoDOT has two options at this point – find some agency or group willing to accept the ownership and liability and maintenance for the bridge, or remove the bridge in the near future.

Why is there such a short time frame to make a decision?

The deterioration of the bridge is such that MoDOT needs to make a decision to remove the bridge soon. Waiting too much longer could result in the bridge collapsing. That would significantly impact the Meramec River (and the people using the river) as well as the service road under the bridge. It could also impact an endangered species (freshwater mussels) living near the bridge.

Are there any other options?

If an organization or agency chooses to own/maintain the bridge, they have a number of different options, based on how much they would like to spend. The cheapest option, at \$3.5 million, would construct a 15-foot wide bridge which could only be used by pedestrians. The most expensive, costing about \$15 million, would completely replace the bridge and would carry vehicles as well as pedestrians. MoDOT will not pursue any of these options due to the fact that this bridge is no longer needed on our system.

How much will it cost to remove the bridge?

Engineers estimate it will cost about \$600,000 to remove the bridge safely.

Why not fix the bridge and charge tolls to the users?

Missouri law would have to be changed. Currently, MoDOT is not allowed to charge tolls on state roads. However, even if the law were changed, tolls would need to be about \$5 for each vehicle to recoup construction costs within about 20 years and it would take even longer when including the costs to collect the tolls.

What are the next steps?

MoDOT will continue to work with interested parties to try to obtain a new owner for the Route 66 State Park Bridge. If MoDOT cannot transfer the bridge to a new party by February 2012, the department will seek to remove the bridge for safety reasons.

If the bridge must be demolished, how will MoDOT preserve its history?

As part of preparation work to demolish the bridge, MoDOT will fully document the bridge for future historical records.

What is the timeline for the overall process?

MoDOT reduced weight limit to 15 tons	2005
MoDOT crews made significant bridge repairs	2006
MoDOT reduced weight limit to 10 tons and restricted traffic to one lane	2007
MoDOT reduced weight limit to 5 tons	2009
MoDOT closed bridge completely due to extremely poor condition	October 2009
MoDOT met with consulting parties to try to find new owner	July 2010
MoDOT holds public meeting	September 2010
Timeline for bridge demolition process	
Add bridge demolition to state transportation improvement plan for July 2012 bid opening	February 2011
Complete another mussel survey (good for a year)	May 2011
Deadline for a new owner with a business plan to take over bridge	February 2012
Plans turned in for demolition	Apr. 2012
Bid letting for demolition	June 2012
Notice to Proceed	July 2012
Completion Date for Contractor to remove bridge	Dec. 2012