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# The Cairo Bridge to Receive Much Needed Repairs

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**Cairo, Illinois** - Most of us call the bridge that connects Cairo, Illinois to Wickliffe, Kentucky as the Cairo Bridge.

A contractor for the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) is gearing up for a repair project on the U.S. 51 Ohio River Bridge between Wickliffe, KY, and Cairo, IL, that will impact truck traffic this summer. **Trucks will be have to be rerouted for approximately 70 days beginning after June 24th.**

According to Kentucky Transportation Cabinet District 1 spokesman Keith Todd, the agency wants truckers and suppliers who depend on the bridge to be aware of the coming project.

"This project involves repairs on bridge deck stringers and replacement of seven joints on the bridge decking," Todd said. "This work will exclude trucks and other large vehicles such as motor homes from the bridge for about 70 days."

Excluding commercial trucks and other large vehicles from the bridge work zone turns a six-mile trip from Wickliffe to Cairo into about an **80-mile detour** via the I-24 Ohio River Bridge at Paducah. By falling in the window for harvesting of Spring wheat, the original project schedule would have created issues for area farmers

attempting to haul their crop to grain facilities. That prompted transportation officials to move the project start date back two weeks.

While the work will create a major inconvenience for area shippers, Todd noted that the maintenance and repair work is required to maintain the long-term reliability of the river crossing.

"We want to give our industries and area farmers who regularly cross the bridge as much advance notice as possible so that they can plan and make logistical adjustments for the coming traffic restriction," Todd said. "As the schedule firms up, we will provide a specific start date for the project. This will impact tour bus traffic, people pulling boats, and any number of other vehicles that will not be allowed through this work zone."

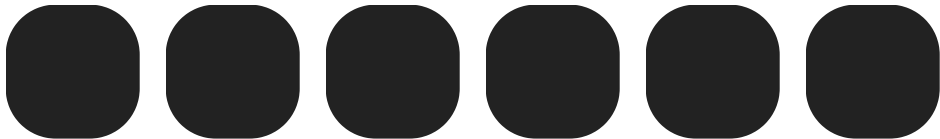
The contractor is currently fabricating steel needed for the repair work. As that preliminary work nears completion, the contractor will schedule a more specific start date sometime **after June 24th**. Todd noted that will likely extend completion of the project into mid-September.

By maintaining passenger vehicle traffic, commuters who travel between Kentucky, Illinois and Missouri will still be able to get to and from work. While the project is scheduled for 70 working-days, KYTC engineers are optimistic it can be completed more quickly than that if the weather cooperates. The bridge will be restricted to one lane traffic and a strict 7 ft. load width due to equipment that will be needed on the deck to accomplish the work.

The U.S. 51 Ohio River Bridge also carries U.S. 60 and U.S. 62 between Kentucky and Illinois. It connects with the U.S. 60/U.S. 62 Mississippi River Bridge which carries traffic between Illinois and Missouri. Commercial trucks make up about 35 percent of the 5,500 vehicles that cross the Ohio River each day, making it a key transportation link between the three states.

The structure was constructed by the Cairo Bridge Commission as a toll facility and opened to traffic on November 11, 1936. Tolls were removed from the crossing on November 11, 1948, when the highway departments of Kentucky and Illinois assumed responsibility for maintenance on the bridge.

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