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## **Northside Pedestrian Bridge remains closed Extensive repairs needed**

The City of Missoula closed the Northside Pedestrian Bridge on September 30 for safety considerations when significant fractures were discovered in the bridge decking and supports. The City has hired engineers to analyze the extent of the damage and design solutions to repair or replace the failing structures. The bridge will remain closed until repairs are completed.

Mayor Jordan Hess says re-opening the bridge is a top priority for the City. "This is an important transportation corridor in Missoula. We recognize that and take it very seriously," Hess said. When engineering consultants complete their analysis and renovation plans later this year, the City will select a construction firm to repair the deck and rehabilitate the masonry bridge supports. City officials hope to start construction in early 2023.

The City has identified several bicycle and pedestrian detour routes during the closure and is working with local agencies to improve the routes and provide alternatives. "The Northside Pedestrian Bridge is a go-to for sustainable commuters and an indispensable connection between the Northside and the rest of the city," said Ben Weiss, the City's Bicycle/Pedestrian program manager. "Now that it is closed for structural repairs, it's important that we provide transportation options. As the City learns more about the condition of the Northside Bridge and a schedule for repairs is established, we will continue to provide updates."

Residents can find information about detours and alternative routes at the Missoula In Motion website, [missoulainmotion.com](http://missoulainmotion.com), and information is available on social media at [www.facebook.com/missoulainmotion](https://www.facebook.com/missoulainmotion) and [www.instagram.com/missoulainmotion](https://www.instagram.com/missoulainmotion).

Mountain Line's Route 3 bus service provides hourly service from several Northside locations to the downtown bus transfer station. Riders can find real-time route information on Mountain Line's Transit mobile app. Learn more at <https://mountainline.com/mobile-app/>.

To make the detours safer and more convenient, the City is working with the Montana Department of Transportation to ensure lighting and sidewalks are in good condition at the Orange Street Underpass. The Missoula Police Department plans to increase patrols in the area as pedestrians, cyclists and motorists get used to the new routes.

In addition, Parks and Recreation crews will prioritize the Orange St. underpass for snow removal and ice melt this winter. City transportation planners and the Street Operations & Maintenance Division are looking at ways to improve crosswalks and commuter visibility at several intersections along the detour routes.

Because the Northside Pedestrian Bridge is integral to Missoula's non-motorized transportation system, the City has monitored bridge conditions and engaged expert inspections throughout the structure's lifespan to preserve the bridge's integrity and protect public safety, said Parks and Recreation Systems & Services Superintendent David Selvage. "Despite consistent maintenance and inspections, it was impossible to predict when or how quickly conditions would change to necessitate emergency closure of the 23-year-old structure," Selvage said.

"The bridge opened in 1999. Contractors performed minor repairs and cyclical maintenance on the deck in 2010. When we recognized accelerated deck pan rusting in 2016, we hired engineers and construction experts from HDR, Inc. to inspect the bridge and develop cost estimates for repair and rehabilitation. The additional analysis helped us evaluate bridge safety and develop the project funding request," Selvage said. Funding to repair the bridge was approved in late 2020.

"In 2021, just as we were about to solicit construction bids for the bridge deck repairs, engineers noted newly developed cracks in the masonry bridge supports. The bid process was suspended to investigate the damaged masonry and develop a remediation plan. Meanwhile, those failures combined with the rapidly deteriorating bridge deck caused engineers to recommend immediate closure of the structure to protect public safety." Selvage says HDR engineers do not recommend temporarily shoring the bridge decks due to the extent and rate of deterioration.

Plans for the deck replacement are completed, and engineers are working to develop a solution for the masonry damage, Selvage added. The City hopes to select a contractor for the rehabilitation project this winter so construction can begin as soon as weather conditions allow.

The City Council has approved about \$900,000 in Park District funding for the project, but the cost of the additional repairs has not yet been determined. City officials will explore all funding options, including grants, state and federal transportation programs, and other applicable programs and sources to cover additional costs.

Residents can learn more about the history and maintenance of the bridge and alternative commuter routes at [www.missoulaparks.org](http://www.missoulaparks.org). For questions about the project, contact Parks Operations at [parksoptions@ci.missoula.mt.us](mailto:parksoptions@ci.missoula.mt.us) or 406-552-6253. For more information about detour routes and commuting, contact Missoula In Motion at [mim@missoulainmotion.com](http://mim@missoulainmotion.com) or 406-552-6675.

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