



State of Illinois
JB Pritzker, Governor



Illinois Department of Transportation
Omer Osman, Secretary

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New Don Welge Memorial Bridge underway in Chester

Joint Illinois-Missouri project investing \$307.1 million to improve safety, mobility

CHESTER – The Illinois Department of Transportation today joined state and local leaders, along with the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission and the Missouri Department of Transportation, to officially announce the start of construction of the new Don Welge Memorial Bridge, a project made possible by Gov. JB Pritzker’s historic, bipartisan Rebuild Illinois capital program.

“My administration is proud to be transforming our state’s infrastructure, and I’ve made it my mission to improve bridges, railways, roads, bike paths, and more to better serve our communities,” **said Gov. Pritzker**. “By investing in the Don Welge Memorial Bridge through our landmark Rebuild Illinois capital plan, we’re ensuring innovation, safety, and reliability for thousands of drivers every day.”

Through a combined \$307.1 million investment between Illinois and Missouri, the project will replace the aging Chester Bridge that carries Illinois 150 and Missouri 51 over the Mississippi River from Randolph County to Perry County, Mo., providing a safe and reliable transportation solution for the region. Courtesy of Rebuild Illinois, IDOT is investing approximately \$143.2 million into the bridge and Illinois approach.

The project, which will be overseen by MoDOT and constructed using a design-build approach, will be completed in December 2026. The new bridge will be named in honor of former Chester resident and longtime bridge advocate Don Welge.

“The new Chester bridge is another investment in safety, mobility and improved quality of life via Rebuild Illinois,” **said Illinois Transportation Secretary Omer Osman**. “We are proud of the partnership with Missouri to replace and upgrade another of our border bridges, which are essential to the economy and livelihood of the entire Midwest.”

Built in 1942, the bridge accommodates 7,000 vehicles daily, connecting much of the region’s agricultural traffic, industries and travelers on the river’s southern Illinois and southeast Missouri sides. The project will replace the two 11-foot lanes with two 12-foot lanes with shoulders, making the bridge twice as wide while also addressing longtime draining and flooding issues.

“Replacing this 80-year-old Mississippi River crossing is vital investment to recapitalize our transportation network between southeast Missouri and southern Illinois,” said **Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission Vice Chairman W. Dustin Boatwright**.

“Today’s groundbreaking marks the beginning of this new cable-stayed bridge, and Missouri is pleased to partner with Illinois and our design-build contractor to deliver the next chapter of interstate commerce for the region.”

Visit www.modot.org/chesterbridge for more information.

Rebuild Illinois is investing a total of \$33.2 billion over six years into the state's aging transportation system, creating jobs and promoting economic growth. RBI is not only the largest capital program in state history, but also the first that touches all modes of transportation: roads and bridges, transit, waterways, freight and passenger rail, aviation, and bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

Accomplishments through Year Four of Rebuild Illinois include approximately \$12.1 billion of improvements statewide on 5,339 miles of highway, 533 bridges and 762 additional safety improvements. Visit <https://idot.click/Rebuild-Illinois> for information and highlights of other Rebuild Illinois projects happening throughout the state.

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