



CHATHAM BRIDGE PROJECT

Stafford County and City of Fredericksburg

Frequently Asked Questions

June 18, 2020

Construction has started to build a better Chatham Bridge!

Chatham Bridge is closing to traffic from June 2020-October 2021 for an improvement project. When the bridge over the Rappahannock River reopens, the connection on Route 3 Business that links Stafford County and the City of Fredericksburg will offer:

- Separate path for walking, running and bicycling
- Scenic overlook
- New railing and lighting fixtures
- Smoother travel surface
- Most critically, the bridge structure will be improved, and it will no longer have a weight limit for vehicle traffic

We have answered our most Frequently Asked Questions about this project from area residents and travelers below. If you have a question that we haven't answered, or have any concerns, please contact Virginia Department of Transportation Communications Manager Kelly Hannon at (540) 374-3344 or email her at Kelly.Hannon@VDOT.Virginia.Gov.

We'll update this list with new questions and answers throughout the project.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

What is the Chatham Bridge project, and why is it needed?

Chatham Bridge carries 16,000 vehicles a day on Route 3 Business between Stafford County and downtown Fredericksburg. The bridge opened to traffic in August 1941, and is 79 years old.

To keep the bridge open and in service, the superstructure of Chatham Bridge must be replaced and the substructure must be repaired.

The bridge is posted with a 15-ton weight limit. The most recent inspection classified the bridge superstructure and substructure condition as "poor" on the National Bridge Inspection Standards scale, which qualifies the bridge as structurally deficient. Due to the weight posting, heavier-weight emergency vehicles must current detour around the bridge.

Deterioration in the bridge deck was accelerated further by record-setting rainfall in 2018. Potholes frequently open in the travel surface requiring emergency repair.

For all of these considerations, VDOT accelerated an improvement project for Chatham Bridge by nine months to start the project as soon as possible.

The project will replace the bridge's deck and travel surface, and will make repairs to the bridge approaches and supporting elements in the substructure, which will allow the removal of the current 15-ton vehicle weight limit posting on the bridge.

Other improvements will be made during the project, including building a 10-foot-wide shared use path for pedestrians, and replacing the bridge's concrete railing and lighting fixtures.

How much does the project cost and how is the project being funded?

The project's total estimated cost is \$23.4 million. It is being funded using state transportation funds, specifically from the State of Good Repair program. The State of Good Repair program targets money to improving bridges in Virginia that are structurally deficient, and are in need of either replacement or substantial rehabilitation.

Learn more about Virginia's State of Good Repair program [here](#).

Who is the project contractor?

The Commonwealth Transportation Board awarded a \$17.8 million contract to build this project to Joseph B. Fay, Co., of Pittsburgh, Pa. The award was made at the CTB's April 21, 2020 meeting.

One recent project built by the Fay Co. includes a widening of the Route 50 bridge over the Severn River near Annapolis, Md.

When does construction begin?

Construction activity began at Chatham Bridge on May 28, 2020. The bridge remained open to traffic in May and early June as crews began positioning construction equipment and materials along the Rappahannock River in the work zone.

Crews also began to install a causeway extending into the Rappahannock River underneath the bridge for construction equipment access.



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When will Chatham Bridge close to traffic?

Chatham Bridge is closing to traffic at **5 a.m. on Monday, June 22, 2020**. Traffic will be detoured until the bridge reopens in October 2021, which is approximately 16 months.

VDOT has announced the closure date by traffic alert, on the project website at virginiadot.org/chathambridge, and through VDOT's Fredericksburg District social media channels on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Nextdoor](#). Message boards and signs have been posted on major routes leading to Chatham Bridge.

Why is the bridge closing – why can't the work be done with two lanes open?

Closing the bridge to traffic is the fastest, safest and most cost-effective approach to the project.

During the project design, VDOT studied whether to pursue a bridge closure with a detour route, or a project that would reduce the four-lane bridge to two lanes.

Reducing the bridge to one lane in each direction during construction was forecast to cause significant congestion and travel delays in the downtown area, especially on William Street. Closing the bridge to traffic with a detour allowed construction to be accomplished faster at a lower cost while avoiding congestion in the downtown area.

I've heard of highway projects where a new bridge can be dropped into place over a week or two, or even a few days. Did VDOT consider a 'rapid replacement' approach?

Rapid bridge replacement can be engineered and accomplished in many settings. However, due to the location of the Chatham Bridge over the Rappahannock River, a rapid bridge replacement or rehabilitation was not a recommended approach due to the surrounding environment. The project budget, using limited state maintenance funds, also could not accommodate a rapid construction effort of this nature.

What is the detour route?

The posted detour route is Route 3 Business, the Blue & Gray Parkway, Dixon Street and Charles Street. View the detour map at [VDOT's project page](#). VDOT completed an improvement project on the Dixon Street exit ramp earlier this year that extended the left turn lane. This will provide

How should trucks and oversize vehicles navigate around the Chatham Bridge closure?

Vehicles taller than 13 feet, 6 inches cannot pass underneath the railroad overpass bridge on Charles Street in Fredericksburg that is part of the detour route.

Vehicles taller than 13 feet, 6 inches should use Blue & Gray Parkway and William Street as a detour route during the Chatham Bridge closure. View the detour map for trucks and oversize vehicles at [VDOT's project page](#).

Where will construction crews park, and will they be using any public parking lots in the City of Fredericksburg?

Construction crews will not use public parking lots in downtown Fredericksburg outside of the designated staging area. VDOT and the contractor understand how important it is to leave these convenient parking spaces available for businesses and visitors, and construction employees will be advised to avoid parking at these locations.

Will the project require any street closures in the downtown Fredericksburg area?

No long-term street closures will be needed in the downtown Fredericksburg area.

Periodic single lane closures will be needed infrequently for delivery of materials or equipment. Lane closures will be scheduled to occur during off-peak hours, and will be communicated in advance on the project page, on social media channels, and in [Hot Spots, which is VDOT's weekly lane closure list](#), which is released on Friday afternoons for the upcoming week.

RAPPHANNOCK RIVER

Will boat traffic be allowed to pass underneath the bridge during construction?

Yes! Recreational traffic on the river can continue to travel underneath the bridge during construction. No portage will be needed. River traffic may be briefly stopped for 24-hour periods, over one or two days, when new beams are lifted into place.

River recreational users should follow river warning signs and buoys that will guide them through dedicated open areas for passage underneath the bridge.



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TRAFFIC IMPACTS

Will VDOT adjust the traffic signal timing along the detour route, since it will be carrying more traffic?

Once the project begins, traffic signal timing will be adjusted by VDOT and the City of Fredericksburg's Department of Public Works to respond to increased traffic demand along the detour route and along Route 1 near the Falmouth Bridge.

Congestion will be closely monitored once the detour is underway. Signal timing adjustments will be made to keep traffic moving.

Can I use Route 1 and the Falmouth Bridge to cross the Rappahannock River to travel between Stafford County and downtown Fredericksburg?

During the project, there will be no change for traffic traveling on Route 1 over Falmouth Bridge into downtown Fredericksburg.

Vehicles on Route 1 southbound crossing Falmouth Bridge can continue to turn left onto Princess Anne Street to downtown Fredericksburg. Vehicles on Route 1 northbound can continue to turn right onto Princess Anne Street toward the downtown area.

But, with additional traffic expected to use Route 1 and the Falmouth Bridge during the Chatham Bridge closure, several changes will be made nearby, which mostly affect travel on Hanson Avenue.

What traffic pattern changes are occurring at the intersection of Hanson Avenue and Route 1, just south of the Falmouth Bridge?

With heavier traffic expected to cross Falmouth Bridge during the Chatham Bridge closure, several traffic pattern changes will be made to keep traffic moving along Route 1:

- Hanson Avenue traffic in Fredericksburg approaching the Route 1 intersection will be limited to right turns onto Route 1 southbound only. Hanson Avenue traffic will be prohibited from proceeding straight across the intersection to Princess Anne Street or making a left turn to Route 1 northbound. Instead, Hanson Avenue traffic seeking to reach Princess Anne Street or Route 1 northbound will be detoured to Fall Hill Avenue.

- Route 1 northbound traffic will be prohibited from turning left onto Hanson Avenue. However, Route 1 northbound traffic at the intersection can continue to proceed straight to cross Falmouth Bridge, and turn right onto Princess Anne Street.
- A new traffic signal will be added at the Princess Anne Street ramp to Route 1 northbound and Falmouth Bridge. The signal will allow for free-flowing right turns onto Route 1 northbound from Princess Anne Street during a green signal.

When will the traffic pattern change at River Road in Stafford County?

When the bridge reopens in fall 2021, River Road will have a new traffic pattern at the intersection with Route 3 Business. The project design can be [viewed on the project page](#). It will be redesigned as a right-turn-only intersection. No left turns will be allowed onto River Road, and River Road traffic will not be permitted to turn left onto Route 3 Business.

While Chatham Bridge is closed for construction, left turns will continue to be permitted from River Road onto Route 3 Business until just before project completion. Near the end of the project, the River Road and Route 3 Business intersection will be closed for several days to allow for construction of the new concrete median that will restrict left turns in this area.

Specific closure dates will be announced in advance to allow motorists to adjust their route. This is not anticipated to occur until summer to fall 2021.

Was a roundabout considered for the intersection of Route 3 Business and River Road?

A roundabout was not a design option reviewed for this intersection, and this location is not considered a good candidate for a roundabout.

The intersection is located in close proximity to an existing traffic signal at Route 3 Business and Chatham Heights Road and the bridge. Roundabouts require sufficient space to build, and this physical location is not well suited for construction of a roundabout.

OTHER QUESTIONS

When does VDOT plan to improve or replace the Falmouth Bridge on Route 1?

To gather information for future planning purposes, VDOT started a feasibility study of the Falmouth Bridge in spring 2019. The study is looking at a range of options to improve the bridge's condition. It will research options such as bridge maintenance and rehabilitation to



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total bridge replacement. It will examine the cost and traffic impacts associated with each option, and whether they would affect any surrounding historic properties.

Results from the study are anticipated to be shared with the City of Fredericksburg and Stafford County later this year.

Finishing the Chatham Bridge project, and the I-95 crossing, will provide more capacity over the Rappahannock River to assist with any traffic impacts associated with a future project on Route 1 at Falmouth Bridge.