

LOCAL

I-55 bridge project: \$394M federal funding secured for rebuild over the Mississippi River

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Published 3:44 p.m. CT July 12, 2024 | Updated 3:44 p.m. CT July 12, 2024



A new and improved Interstate 55 bridge is coming soon.

Officials including U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen and Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee announced Friday that a \$394 million grant from the federal government would be going towards the rebuilding of the I-55 bridge, also known as the America's River Crossing Bridge.

The Tennessee and Arkansas departments of transportation filed a joint application through the Bridge Investment Program, Large Bridge Projects Program, according to a press release. The grant came from the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

On Friday, the Federal Highway Administration said that the project would move forward.

The \$393.7 million federal investment will aid in funding the whole of the bridge rebuild, estimated to cost between \$800 million and \$1 billion.

"I'm proud to have worked with the President, the U.S. Department of Transportation, as well as the outstanding team in Memphis and the governor's office in successfully getting this extremely large and necessary grant for the construction of the new bridge," Cohen said.



Pictured: U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen

Deputy governor and TDOT Commissioner Butch Eley praised the bipartisan work at the state level to help secure funding for the project.

"This historic project is four times larger than anything we have previously built. This partnership between states and the federal government underscores our bipartisan commitment to delivering innovative infrastructure solutions that support growth and economic prosperity," Eley said in a statement.

What is next for the I-55 bridge?

TDOT has been seeking grant funding for the project since December 2023. Estimates for rebuilding the bridge, which dates back to 1949, were between \$800 million and \$1 billion with construction set to begin in 2026. Funding for the bridge was expected to come from the state's Transportation Modernization Act.

In May, TDOT revealed updated plans for a new I-55 bridge. The concept design featured a 10-lane bridge (three traffic lanes on each side along with two shoulder lanes). The existing bridge features four lanes. In addition, three different design concepts for bridge's tower construction were announced. The tentative designs are available on TDOT's website.

Memphis Mayor Paul Young said that the "historic investment" would help connect the community with the region and the world. Young said that the city is "honored by the grant."

Greater Memphis Chamber CEO Ted Townsend voiced appreciation for the department of transportation to Young and to former Mayor Jim Stickland for "being local advocates, and the Chamber's Transportation Committee for being persistent and never taking their eye off of the ball."

Tennessee Department of Transportation and the Arkansas Department of Transportation have each committed up to \$250 million for the bridge rebuild, according to a separate press release about the funding from Lee.

"This unprecedented investment in Memphis marks the single-largest transportation investment in Tennessee state history and will be transformative for our infrastructure," Lee said.

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