

STAN MUSIAL VETERANS MEMORIAL BRIDGE

In February 2008, Missouri and Illinois agreed on a plan to fund construction of a new bridge and the rerouting of Interstate 70. This weekend, six years later, the project is being unveiled to pedestrians and then vehicles. Eventually, the bridge is expected to carry 40,000 cars and trucks every day, relieving traffic on other downtown bridges. Here are some of the facts and figures of the massive construction project, and some information about how to get around on the new roads.

Access to the Poplar Street Bridge

To go from Lambert Airport to Saugeat, you should still use the Poplar Street Bridge. Take eastbound I-70 to newly designated I-44 just south of the Stan Musial Veterans Memorial Bridge. Take I-44 to the Poplar Street Bridge to get to Route 3 and Saugeat. Sometime next year, the Missouri Department of Transportation will remove the ramp from I-44 to the Poplar Street Bridge. At that point, you should take the Stan Musial Veterans Memorial Bridge to Illinois, exit at Illinois Route 3, then follow Route 3 to the south. That will change when a new connection is built from the Martin Luther King Bridge to Route 3. But that is still more than a year away.

KEY
 New bridges
 New roads

Access to and from Tucker

Although there is a ramp to Tucker from eastbound I-70, there is no ramp from Tucker to westbound I-70. From Tucker, take Cass to Broadway north to Brooklyn. Signs direct you to 10th, where you can access westbound I-70.

Renamed I-44

The interstate highway south of the Stan Musial Veterans Memorial Bridge that was previously I-70 leading to the Poplar Street Bridge and I-55 to the I-44 junction will now simply be I-44. The switch will occur when the new bridge opens. The new stretch of I-44 will dead end at the new bridge. Through traffic will continue on westbound I-70.

Westbound bridge exit options

Coming from Illinois, drivers will either continue west on I-70 or exit into downtown on Tucker. There is no exit heading south onto the new stretch of I-44. Likewise, there is no exit to the bridge from the new stretch of I-44.

Third-longest bridge of its kind

With a main span of 1,500 feet, the Stan Musial Veterans Memorial Bridge will be the third-longest cable-stayed bridge in the U.S. Only the John J. Audubon Bridge in Louisiana and the Arthur Ravenel Bridge in South Carolina are longer.

Navigation systems

Your GPS system should recognize the new bridge and changes to the roads very soon. MoDOT engineers say TomTom representatives already have mapped out the new bridge and interchanges. If you pull up a Garmin map, the new I-70 bridge is already reflected. The timing of when the changes are reflected on GPS may vary.

Traffic relief on bridges

The opening of the new bridge should mean less traffic on the existing downtown bridges. Transportation officials expect the new bridge to siphon off roughly 20 percent of Poplar Street Bridge traffic, which is now about 120,000 vehicles a day. It should divert about half of the traffic now using the Martin Luther King Bridge. Eventually, the new bridge is expected to carry about 40,000 cars a day.

It's not just the bridge

Even though the new bridge is the crowning jewel, the project of the rerouting of I-70 is about three miles long from the I-64 interchange to the Missouri side, where it hooks up with the existing route of I-70 westbound.

Archaeological significance

The bridge project in Illinois produced the largest archaeological dig in the U.S. from 2009 to 2012. Over 6,000 features were investigated during this effort. The Illinois Department of Transportation received the Environmental Excellence Award in 2011 from the Federal Highway Administration.

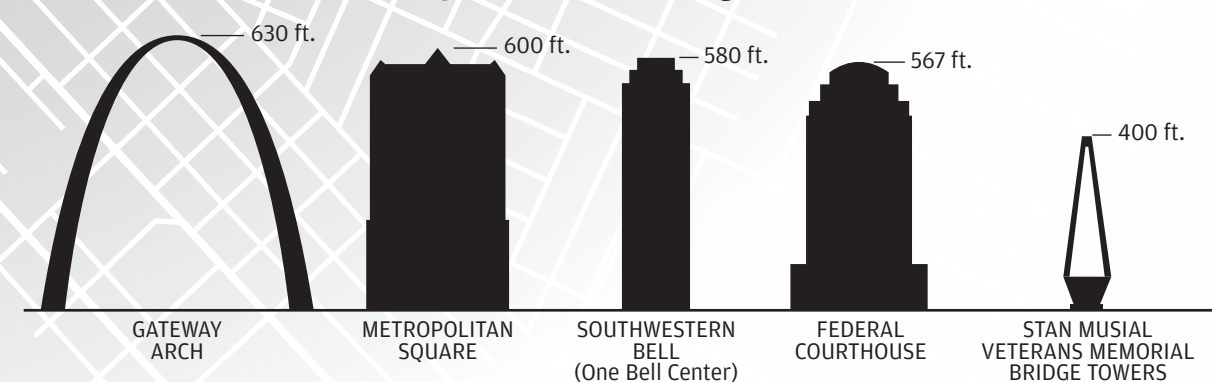
Gateway
Speedway

Approximate
area of
archaeological dig

Miles of new roads in Illinois

The Illinois side of the project involved the vast majority of new road construction for the rerouting of Interstate 70. In all, 32 different projects were completed in Illinois. By comparison, Missouri completed 5 projects.

Tallest structures in St. Louis compared with the new bridge towers



ACTUAL SIZE



1/2 MILE

Graphic by Tom Borgman and Ken Leiser | Post-Dispatch