

## Work starts on a \$56 million bridge repair in Pittsburgh while a nearby bridge closes for safety

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The underside of the Charles Anderson Bridge in Schenley Park on April 13, 2024. More than 20,000 vehicles used the bridge each day before it closed.

Work has begun to fix one deteriorating bridge in Oakland, while officials closed another nearby bridge indefinitely due to safety concerns.

On Monday, city officials gathered to announce the beginning of [a \\$56 million project to repair the Charles Anderson Bridge](#) — a span that carries the Boulevard of the Allies between Schenley Park and Oakland that's been closed since February 2023. During the weekend, [the city shut down the Panther Hollow Bridge](#), which connects Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens to Schenley Park near the swimming pool.

"I think people who first heard about this [Charles Anderson Bridge] project, maybe from around the region, might have thought this was just a bridge in a park," said Rich Fitzgerald, the former Allegheny County Executive and current executive director of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, the region's federally designated organization for planning and infrastructure projects.

"This is really a major artery to get people from not just Squirrel Hill to Oakland, but really anywhere in the eastern suburbs," he said.

More than 20,000 vehicles a day used to drive over the Charles Anderson Bridge before it closed. Many of them were diverted over the Panther Hollow Bridge as a detour between Oakland and Squirrel Hill. Now, officials are recommending a path along Schenley Drive, Wightman Street, Beacon Street and Hobart Street.

The Charles Anderson Bridge was built in 1939 and is owned by the city of Pittsburgh. It's the first bridge to be closed and repaired after Pittsburgh Mayor Ed Gainey ordered a review of city-owned bridges following the Fern Hollow Bridge collapse above Frick Park in 2022.

"At the end of the day, I promised everybody that for me, I don't ever want to wake up to another Fern Hollow," Gainey said. "I never want to wake up to that again."

During the next two years, workers will fix the bridge's historic truss, install a new deck and supports with several million pounds of steel, fix the concrete piers and abutments, restore the ornamental railings and put on a fresh coat of paint.

The new Charles Anderson Bridge will look a little different than the old one. It will go from four lanes of traffic — two lanes going both directions — to three. Two lanes will head from Oakland into Squirrel Hill, and only one lane will go inbound from Squirrel Hill to Oakland. The sidewalks will be wider, and a two-way bike lane will be added across the bridge.

Starting Nov. 4, it will also be closed to bikes and pedestrians. Work should wrap up in fall 2026. This bridge work and closure overlaps with the anticipated [month-long closure of the Commercial Street Bridge on the Parkway East by the Squirrel Hill Tunnel during summer 2026](#). All signs point to traffic challenges coming in the east.

### Few good bridges

There are 1,294 bridges in Allegheny County. Only 30% of them are in good condition, according to an analysis of [Federal Highway Administration National Bridge Inventory data from 2023](#) by TRIP, a national transportation research group.

The Charles Anderson Bridge had been rated in poor condition since 2012, with advanced deterioration of its concrete deck and corrosion and damage throughout the bridge's structure. The Panther Hollow Bridge was most recently [rated fair](#), which means the overall structure is sound, but there's some minor deterioration to parts of the bridge.

In 2023, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and other bridge owners repaired or replaced more than 200 bridges in Pennsylvania. That resulted in the biggest drop in the number of poor-condition bridges in the country, [according to the Federal Highway Administration](#).

Recent federal aid has given a boost to bridge repairs. Federal funds make up 43% of the money PennDOT uses to fix bridges, according to TRIP. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, passed in 2021, gave the state \$13.1 billion to use for highway and bridge work over five years. And Gov. Josh Shapiro's budget for 2024 included [\\$125 million from the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) for transportation investments, including work on the Charles Anderson Bridge. But fixing a bridge has gotten more expensive in the past few years. Construction costs rose by 69% since 2021, according to [the National Highway Construction Cost Index by the Federal Highway Administration](#).

It's too early to tell how much money will be needed to fix the Panther Hollow Bridge and how long that work will take, according to Eric Setzler, chief engineer at the city Department of Mobility and Infrastructure.

During an inspection of the bridge last week, consultants told the city that at least one of the four steel trusses holding up the bridge had deteriorated enough to cause concern. That prompted the city to close the bridge to vehicles on Saturday. The inspectors are still working on their analysis, Setzler said.