



## **U. S. CONGRESSMAN JOHN D. DINGELL: East Stadium Boulevard Bridge repair not just shovel worthy, but shovel ready**

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*Editor's note: U.S. Congressman John Dingell's office released this op-ed piece Friday:*

For anyone that lives, works or travels through Ann Arbor, [the crumbling concrete at East Stadium Boulevard Bridge](#) is impossible to miss.

The bridge runs through the heart of Ann Arbor, connecting the commuters coming off US-23, M-14 and I-94 that go over or under each day during their drive to the University of Michigan, the driving force behind Ann Arbor's economy. Every day more than 25,000 automobiles cross the bridge.

And in those cars are fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, doctors and police officers - the greatest treasures Ann Arbor has. We need to do whatever we can to ensure the safety of our people and that means ensuring this bridge is safe and secure.

The call to repair or reconstruct this bridge is an important one. Currently, the bridge over State Street has a Federal Deficiency Rating of 2, indicating the poor condition of this structure and the serious hazard of keeping this bridge open. The City of Ann Arbor has already reduced the traffic lanes on the bridges from four to two for the public's safety.

I have met with both city and university officials to better understand this problem and what must be done to address it, as has my staff, both in Michigan and DC. The city is going

<http://www.annarbor.com/news/temporary-fix-on-east-stadium-bridge-receives-ann-arbor-city-council-approval/>

forward with targeted repairs of the bridge and I have requested funding for this project in the 2010 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill, and I am also attempting to secure funds in the upcoming Surface Transportation Authorization Act that I hope Congress will soon consider.

In addition to these efforts, I am strongly supporting the TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) grant application, which the city has submitted to the Department of Transportation for funding made available in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. I have personally called Secretary LaHood to express the importance of this project to the 15th District.

I mention these acts because I believe the community deserves and requires this bridge to be repaired, however, it will take much more than one congressman to get this bridge repaired, especially at a cost of more than \$21 million. The city is working tirelessly to secure funding, looking to both federal and state resources. This is a wise plan as it is unlikely that one source of funding will cover the cost of the project.

Like you, the impression of a crumbling bridge is not what I would like the Ann Arbor community to be remembered for. East Stadium Bridge is much more than an integral piece of Ann Arbor's road system, it also serves as the road to the Big House, connecting UM football or basketball fans to campus.

It's not uncommon for a national audience to see the bridge from the aerial shots over Michigan Stadium and UM's athletic campus. Aside from aesthetics, repairing the bridge would have major economic benefits, with both short term construction jobs and the long term connection it provides for our city. In fact, the city noted in its TIGER grant application that a repaired bridge would save within two years approximately \$56 million in societal costs such as crashes, delays and vehicle miles traveled.

The city, the state and the University of Michigan are all doing what they can to address this issue and I am glad to join them in this effort. I will also be inviting officials from U.S.

Department of Transportation (DOT) to come and see first hand what condition the bridge is in and, more importantly, what vital transportation and economic benefits are derived from its use.

I believe that if DOT sees the structure firsthand they will have a far better understanding of its critical nature and will see for themselves that this project is not just shovel ready but shovel worthy.

But make no mistake, something must be done about this bridge and done soon.