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Grand Auglaize Bridge closed to pedestrian and vehicle traffic

A Miller County bridge on the National Register of Historic Places has been closed to pedestrian and vehicle traffic. by [Jeff Haldiman](#) Jan. 8 2021 @ 1:30pm



These photos were submitted as part of the Save The Historical Brumley Swinging Bridges group's 29-page history of the bridge. Missouri's Historic Preservation Council said it can still be referred to as a "swinging bridge" as the original construction has remained intact. "In this regard, the bridge retains its historic character of the early 20th century," the Council said in a July meeting. It was officially designated Oct. 8 in the National Register of Historic Places.

A Miller County bridge on the National Register of Historic Places has been closed to pedestrian and vehicle traffic.

At the request of the Miller County Commission, inspectors from the Missouri Department of Transportation did an inspection of the Grand Auglaize Bridge, part of the Swinging Bridges in Brumley, on Wednesday.

The wire-suspension bridge reaches into Lake of the Ozarks State Park on the west end and Miller County on the east.

"County officials had concerns about the structural integrity of the bridge," said MoDOT Central District Area Engineer Bob Lynch. "By chance, we were doing normal routine inspections of bridges in the county on Wednesday when we got word from the commissioners asking us to look at the bridge." Lynch said inspectors checked the anchoring system, the cables that come off the bridge and anchor into the ground.

"The cables are encased in concrete, and the concrete is deteriorating," Lynch said. "It was bad enough to cause us to tell the county they should close the bridge until they figure out what they want to do."

By state statute, MoDOT is required to inspect all bridges in the state whether or not they are on the state system, Lynch said.

"Typically we look at bridges every two years; however, this one requires inspection every year because of its condition," he said. "In odd years MoDOT inspectors do the inspection, and in even years a private contractor hired by the county does the inspection."

The Grand Auglaize Bridge and the smaller Mill Creek Bridge were built around 1931 by Joseph A. Dice, of Warsaw, who constructed as many as 40 bridges in Missouri, according to local author and historian Kelly Warman-Stallings, who helped get the bridge on the National Register.

The Grand Auglaize Bridge has been in danger of closing down because of lack of funding to upkeep its cables and structure, Stallings said, while the Mill Creek Bridge has been renovated.

"The Grand Auglaize is the last original swinging bridge in Missouri," Stallings said. "I feel sorry for the locals because what had been a five-minute drive to get into Osage Beach with the bridge open is now a 45-minute to one-hour drive."

"We understand this means additional drive time, but the safety of those driving over the bridge has to be taken into account," Lynch said. A group of residents is working to raise funds to help keep the bridge open.

Miller County Presiding Commissioner Tom Wright said the county hopes to work with the group as they look at ways to preserve the bridge.

"We have no intentions of tearing the bridge down," Wright said. "We've known it's been deteriorating for several years, and it was recent maintenance work that led us to ask MoDOT to do a check."

Wright said they may not be able to reopen the bridge to car traffic, but they are hopeful they can make it safe for pedestrian traffic.

"A lot of people visit the bridge because it is something you don't see many places," Wright said. "With it now being on the National Register, that may affect what we can do. We don't have a timeline on how will proceed.

"Age has caught up with the bridge," Wright added. "It was built for horse and buggies and Model-T's, and here we are in modern times and it's still being used. We had a traffic counter on the bridge not long ago and found 35-40 cars were using it every day and going as fast 50 mph."

Wright said the commission hopes to find an engineering firm with experience working on historical properties to help on this project.

"What happened here was no one's fault," Wright said. "Things just eventually wear out."