

# Natchez Trace Parkway

John Coffee Memorial Bridge Replacement or Rehabilitation  
Virtual Civic Engagement Meeting

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## YOU'RE INVITED!

The National Park Service (NPS), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), has initiated planning efforts for the John Coffee Memorial Bridge Replacement or Rehabilitation project. The project is located along the Natchez Trace Parkway (Parkway), spanning across the Tennessee River, six miles north of Cherokee, Alabama.

The NPS is seeking public feedback on this project during a 30-day civic engagement period. The public is encouraged to share observations, concerns, and ideas about the information presented in this newsletter. This information will be used to refine the elements and preliminary range of options under consideration, identify issues, and ensure that NPS has the information needed to move forward in the planning process.

After considering input received during this civic engagement period, the Parkway will refine the preliminary range of options and determine if it is appropriate to move forward with formal environmental compliance processes.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

### IN-PERSON MEETINGS

The NPS will host two in-person civic engagement meetings to present an overview of the project. The in-person meetings will begin with a short presentation followed by time for attendees to ask questions and submit comments. The in-person meetings will be held from 5:00 to 6:30 pm CT. Additional meeting details are included below:

- **November 2, 2022:**  
Cherokee Senior Center  
1249 2nd Street, Cherokee, AL 35616
- **November 3, 2022:**  
Florence-Lauderdale Public Library  
350 N Wood Ave, Florence, AL 35630

### VIRTUAL MEETING

The NPS will also host a virtual civic engagement meeting to present an overview of the project. The virtual meeting will begin with a short presentation followed by time for attendees to ask questions and submit comments. The virtual civic engagement meeting will be held on October 25, 2022, from 5:00 to 6:30 pm CT.

Please register for the virtual public meeting by October 25, 2022 at:

- Join by Computer, Tablet, or Smartphone:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_eWF7TrB9S7mBHxacY5k8Bw](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_eWF7TrB9S7mBHxacY5k8Bw)

- Join by Phone (Dial the number below and enter the Webinar ID/Passcode):
  - Phone: +1 312-626-6799
  - Webinar ID: 822 1546 3408
  - Passcode: 793353

*John Coffee Memorial Bridge and Tennessee River, view west.  
Photo Credit: NPS*



*Natchez Trace Parkway in autumn.  
Photo Credit: Marc Muench*

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### **Natchez Trace Parkway**

The Natchez Trace Parkway is a 444-mile roadway, commemorating the Old Natchez Trace. Established in 1938 by the National Park System, the Parkway bisected the traditional homelands of the Natchez, Chickasaw, and Choctaw nations.

The Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Natchez are some of the most historically significant and influential groups of people to have lived along the Natchez Trace. These American Indian nations were some of the first to establish the Natchez Trace, ushering in an era of trade and travel through this region for centuries. When the United States began to expand westward in the late 1700s and early 1800s, numerous travelers used the area for travel and eventually created a clearly marked path.

Today, the Parkway is a beautiful greenway leading from the southern Appalachian foothills of Tennessee to the bluffs of the lower Mississippi River. The Parkway also provides distinct ecosystems and habitats for nearly 1,500 species of plants, 33 mammal species, 134 bird species, and 70 species of reptiles and amphibians.

As a designated National Scenic Byway, All-American Road, and bicycling route, the Parkway is an important treasure for modern travelers to experience historic and scenic landscapes.

# PURPOSE AND NEED

## John Coffee Memorial Bridge

The John Coffee Memorial Bridge opened to traffic in 1964, but has never undergone a major rehabilitation. Today, the bridge continues to provide access and connections for local communities across Alabama and for Parkway travelers of the Natchez Trace Parkway. The nearly 1-mile-long bridge passes over a navigable portion of the Tennessee River, which also allows for passage of barge traffic underneath the bridge. The bridge, while currently safe, has exceeded its design life and is becoming structurally deficient, meaning the bridge is deteriorating due to time and limitations of the original design, and will soon be limited in load carrying capacity.

### PURPOSE:

The purpose of the project is to maintain a safe and reliable bridge crossing for parkway users along the historic Natchez Trace Parkway, over the Tennessee River, while minimizing impacts to park resources.

### NEED:

The project is needed because this 60-year old bridge has exceeded its 50-year design life, and is a fracture critical structure, which means there are no redundancies in the bridge members and the failure of one girder will cause one or multiple spans to collapse. In addition, there is widespread cracking in the bridge deck, notable deterioration of the bridge piers, and these structural issues can be no longer be addressed with routine maintenance.



Visitors use area at parking lot on southeast side of John Coffee Memorial Bridge (Tennessee River in background). Photo Credit: Marc Muench

# RANGE OF PRELIMINARY OPTIONS

A significant portion of the environmental planning process is to evaluate a range of preliminary options for the John Coffee Memorial Bridge Replacement or Rehabilitation project. The range of preliminary options propose NPS intervention for compliance with environmental laws to address structural issues exhibited on the John Coffee Memorial Bridge. Preliminary options being considered early in the planning process include a “no-action” option and four action options, which are summarized below.

## No-Action Option

The NPS would not rehabilitate the bridge, which would require the eventual closure of the bridge.



*John Coffee Memorial Bridge and Tennessee River at sunset, view west.  
Photo Credit: Marc Muench*



*Eastern Redbud blooming along Natchez Trace Parkway.  
Photo Credit: Marc Muench*

## Preliminary Option 1

### New Bridge North of Existing Bridge

This option would construct a new bridge north of the existing bridge location and demolish the existing bridge once construction is complete. Existing access would be maintained on John Coffee Memorial Bridge during construction.

The replacement bridge would feature 11-foot travel lanes in each direction, six-foot paved shoulders, and a five-foot walkway. Construction is anticipated for up to four years for this project and would require new construction impacts to Parkway resources.

## Preliminary Option 2

### New Bridge South of Existing Bridge

This option would construct a new bridge south of the existing bridge location and demolish the existing bridge once construction is complete. Existing access would be maintained on John Coffee Memorial Bridge during construction.

The replacement bridge would feature 11-foot travel lanes in each direction, six-foot paved shoulders, and a five-foot walkway. Construction is anticipated for up to four years for this project and would require new construction impacts to Parkway resources.

## Preliminary Option 3

### Replace Bridge in Place

This option would demolish the existing bridge and construct a new bridge in the same location/on the same alignment. However, existing access would not be maintained on John Coffee Memorial Bridge during construction. During construction, traffic would be detoured off-site for approximately 42 miles.

The replacement bridge would feature 11-foot travel lanes in each direction, six-foot paved shoulders, and a five-foot walkway. Construction is anticipated for up to four years for this project, but would not require new construction impacts to Parkway resources.

## Preliminary Option 4

### Bridge Rehabilitation

This option would rehabilitate the existing bridge using new design standards. However, existing access would not be maintained on John Coffee Memorial Bridge during construction.

During construction, traffic would be detoured off-site for approximately 42 miles. Construction is anticipated for up to four years for this project, but would not require new construction impacts to Parkway resources. A rehabilitated bridge would not last as long as a new bridge and would require a bridge replacement sooner.

Additional resources impacts are anticipated; however, disturbance would be less than those from a new bridge on a new alignment.

# PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

The civic engagement period provides an opportunity for the public to be involved in the planning process. The preliminary schedule outlined below is subject to change. Additional opportunities will be made available for the public to provide input during the planning process.

OCTOBER 2022	<b>Civic Engagement Meetings</b> ★ WE ARE HERE
NOVEMBER 2022	<b>Civic Engagement Comment Period Concludes</b>
FALL TO WINTER 2022	<b>Analyze Comments and Prepare Scoping Summary Report</b>
FALL 2022 TO SPRING 2023	<b>Begin Gathering Data and Finalize Supporting Resource Studies</b>
SPRING 2023	<b>Public Scoping Period Begins</b>

# HOW TO PROVIDE COMMENTS

Your participation will help shape this project for years to come! Your input helps guide the NPS to develop solutions that complement the community's goals and vision. All comments received from the public and stakeholders will be reviewed and discussed as the project develops. The civic engagement period is a 30-day comment period beginning October 25, 2022, until November 28, 2022. Please submit all comments no later than November 28, 2022.



Submit comments electronically (preferred method):

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/JohnCoffeeMemorialBridge>



Mail or hand-deliver written comments to:

Natchez Trace Parkway  
2680 Natchez Trace Parkway  
Tupelo, MS 38804



*View of the historic Old Trace Drive.  
Photo Credit: Marc Muench*

**Note:** Comments will not be accepted by phone or fax. Please note that comments – including personal identifying information, such as your address, phone number, and email address – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Comments submitted by individuals or organizations on behalf of other individuals or organizations will not be accepted.