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New Life for Old Bridge

The decades-old bridge connecting St. Albans to Nitro has long been a concern for people, including city leaders.

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ST. ALBANS, W.Va. (WSAZ) – Many people call the bridge dangerous. Some **vehicles** can't even drive across it because it can't support them.

The decades-old bridge connecting St. Albans to Nitro has long been a concern for people, including city leaders.

A St. Albans transportation committee met Monday night and endorsed some recommendations for fixing the problems on the Dick Henderson Bridge.

"Fix the cracks that [are] in it. When you walk across the sidewalk there are gaps in between the concrete," says Frnakie Stewart who frequently drives across the bridge.

The deteriorating conditions have created challenges for people.

"KRT **buses** are not allowed to go over it, and that's still not right," says John Fields, who lives in St. Albans.

The state says the bridge is **safe**.

But, some drivers in Nitro and St. Albans say there's room for improvement.

During its Monday meeting, the transportation committee's members unanimously voted on three things they want the state to do.

First among those ideas is having the state prepare a formal study, analyzing the impacts of putting a new bridge down the road from the current one. The alternate site would be Walnut Street.

St. Albans Mayor Dick Callaway says the state may still decide to refurbish the existing bridge instead.

The committee wants to look at expanding West Virginia Route 25 in Nitro to four lanes. Members also want the new bridge, wherever it ends up, to have four lanes.

Even though state officials say the bridge is fine for people to use, some question how much longer that will be the case.

"But as time goes by, of course, it's like the human body. It's going to take its wear and tear and become a little bit less effective at what it's supposed to do. So, in the very near future it will have to be addressed," says Callaway.

Callaway says refurbishing the existing bridge could cost about \$30 million.

"My understanding is the Department of Highways in the State of West Virginia can probably free up somewhere in the neighborhood of perhaps \$25 million to \$30 million to do the refurbishing on 3rd Street. And we're asking them to look into considering the idea of putting a comparable bridge at the Walnut Street location for money somewhere in that neighborhood."

Callaway says the West Virginia Division of Highways is in the process of scheduling public hearings about a new bridge. He hopes a final plan will be in place by early 2012.