



**The Corporation of the
City of Sault Ste. Marie**

COUNCIL REPORT

October 14, 2025

TO: Mayor Matthew Shoemaker and Members of City Council
AUTHOR: Maggie McAuley, Manager of Design and Transportation
Engineering
DEPARTMENT: Public Works and Engineering Services
RE: Herkimer Street Bridge Closure – Update

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the closure of the Herkimer Street bridge.

Background

The Herkimer Street bridge is located approximately 0.5km west of Carpin Beach Road over the Big Carp River. The bridge, built in 1963, is a wood timber bridge. During the 2024 inspection of the bridge, structural defects were observed and it was recommended that the bridge be immediately closed to traffic. At the November 12, 2024 Council meeting, a by-law to close Herkimer Street from Victoria Street to Carpin Beach Road until November 30, 2025 was approved.

Analysis

The City retained Tulloch Engineering to complete a Load Evaluation and Feasibility Study. The study concludes that the bridge can be reopened to most traffic with a reduction to a single lane crossing of the bridge, reduced posted speed, and a load restriction of 16 tonnes. Reinforcement of components of the bridge will be required prior to opening it to traffic. Public Works is prepared to assist with the traffic control and reinforcement of the bridge with the support of a contractor for the in-water works.

Continuous monitoring of the bridge will be required, and if unfavourable results are obtained, a re-closure of the bridge may be necessary. The periodic monitoring of the bridge is at an estimated cost of \$10k for the remainder of 2025 and 2026.

The proposed load restrictions will require a specialized snow removal routine. Due to the location of the bridge, this cannot be accommodated with the City's existing fleet. Due to the recommended load restriction on the bridge, it is proposed to hire a contractor with smaller equipment to plough Herkimer Road between Victoria Street and Carpin Beach Road. The cost of this contractor will be absorbed in the 2026 winter maintenance budget.

As this option is temporary, the future of the Herkimer Bridge must be decided. The following options are under consideration.

- Decommission the Herkimer Bridge: Removing the bridge would create two dead-end roads, which would require the creation of two snowplow turnarounds if the road is to remain. Access to the Provincial Groundwater Monitoring Wells on the west side of the creek must be maintained seasonally. To decommission a bridge is exempt from the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA) process if the bridge is assessed to not have heritage value. If it is assessed to have heritage value, the decommissioning must follow a Schedule B EA. The approximate budget to complete this is \$240,000, assuming no EA is required.
- Replace the bridge at its current location: Replacing the bridge with no improvements to the creek or the alignment is exempt from the EA process if the bridge is assessed to not have heritage value. If it is assessed to have heritage value, the replacement must follow a Schedule B EA. The approximate budget to complete this is \$2.8M assuming no EA is required.
- Replace the bridge at a different location: Ongoing scour and erosion at the bridge site and along the road will continue to impact this road. Replacing the bridge at another location could improve traffic safety, eliminate the scour and erosion of the edge of the road, and eliminate the 90-degree turn on the west approach. The relocation of a bridge must follow a Schedule B EA. The approximate budget for this option is difficult to estimate because we do not know what the EA would recommend; however, for comparison purposes, we estimate the budget to be approximately \$3.6M.

Throughout the closure and consultation by letter to the residents in the area, over 45 comments were received from residents. Almost all of the comments were in favour of reinstating the bridge. A summary of the comments are as follows:

- Herkimer Street bridge provides a second entrance to the area. Having only one entrance by way of Townline Road lengthens the emergency access response, limits the evacuation route if necessary to Townline Road which also has a bridge. Should this bridge be closed due to emergency or construction, access to this neighbourhood would be a challenge.
- If the bridge were closed, two more dead-end roads would be created, increasing the risk of dumping and illegal campfires.
- Townline Road and Herkimer Street road surfaces are severely deteriorated and have a number of potholes.
- Bridge closure increases the traffic volume and speed on Townline Road.
- Bridge closure increases the distance residents have to detour.

The small minority who provided comments in favour of the bridge removal were residents of Carpin Beach Road. They noted the decrease in traffic volume and speed on Carpin Beach as their reason for supporting the bridge closure.

Based on the information above, staff recommends that Council proceed with a Schedule B EA. This will allow the review and evaluation of all the options, including decommissioning, replacing in the same location, and replacing in a different location. At this time, the Herkimer Bridge replacement is not specifically included in the 2026-2030 Capital Transportation Plan; however, there is a yearly allotment of \$1.5M for bridge and aqueducts. While the EA is underway, staff proposes to proceed with reopening the bridge with the load restriction and reinforcement that has been recommended.

The road closure by-law 2024-165 for the Herkimer Street closure expires November 30, 2025. A new by-law to extend the temporary road closure until such time as the reinforcement of the bridge is complete is presented elsewhere in this Agenda.

Financial Implications

The financial implications to this recommendation include the temporary repairs to the bridge and the future monitoring in the amount of \$40,000 which can be covered within the bridge maintenance allotment of the 2025 Miscellaneous Construction budget. Costs for additional winter maintenance by a private contractor can be accommodated in the 2026 winter maintenance budget, if the maintaining services increase for winter control is accepted. A consultant for the Schedule B EA will be retained through the City's procurement process and can be covered under the 2025 Miscellaneous Construction budget. Further construction budgets will be brought to Council at a future meeting.

Strategic Plan / Policy Impact / Climate Impact

This report is linked to the new infrastructure focus area of the Corporate Strategic Plan.

Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that Council take the following action:

Resolved that the report of the Manager of Design and Transportation Engineering dated October 14, 2025, concerning the Herkimer Street Bridge Closure Update be received and that staff proceed with the reinforcement and reopening of the Herkimer Street Bridge as per the recommendations and proceed with retaining a consulting engineer to begin the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment.

The relevant By-law 2025-145 is listed under item 12 of the Agenda and will be read with all by-laws under that item.

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Respectfully submitted,

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