

MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: May 28, 2025
To: Infrastructure, Transportation and Safety Sub-Committee
From: Nathan Bottema, Project Engineer
Report Number: ITS25-009
Attachments: None

Title: Shakespeare Gardens Island Pedestrian Footbridge Removal

Objective: To inform Council of the Parks Board decision to remove the Shakespeare Gardens Footbridge and naturalize the island.

Background: The Shakespeare Gardens Footbridge (09-FB-2) is located within the Shakespeare Gardens on park lands and provides pedestrian access to the Avon River Island Park. The bridge is a wooden arch bridge with a span length of 7.2m, has a width of 1.3m and is not AODA compliant. The island is a natural park with two memorial benches.

In 2019, the footbridge received \$15,000 in remedial repairs extending the life expectancy by an estimated 5 to 10 years. The 2023 bi-annual visual inspection identified that the bridge should be replaced in the next 1 – 5 years due to the rotten wood elements including the floor beams, deck, and hand railings. In July 2024, safety concerns were raised, and the bridge was closed to the public based on the recommendation from B.M. Ross and Associates.

Prior to initiating the bridge replacement design, staff engaged with the Parks Board to determine the necessary requirements for defining the project scope. At the Parks Board meeting on November 4, 2024, the following resolution was adopted:

Resolution: THAT the Board of Park Management supports not replacing the wooden bridge to the island beside the Shakespearean Gardens and that the island be naturalized with undisturbed pollinator vegetation.

The Community Services Department supports this decision and intends to implement a temporary access solution to facilitate maintenance of the naturalized island as necessary.

At the December 16, 2024, Regular Council meeting, a notice of intent was issued to designate 15 Huron Street, referred to as The Shakespearean Gardens, under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act (COU24-159). This pedestrian footbridge structure was not listed in the parks designated features and has no historical status.

Analysis: The estimated cost to replace the Shakespeare Garden Island Bridge is \$100,000.00. The terrain to get to the existing bridge is challenging and a new alignment would be required if replaced. Restoring the aesthetic of the existing arch bridge structure while complying with AODA standards is unattainable.

The island is proposed to be converted to a naturalized park and the benches shall be relocated within the parks system.

The bridge would be dismantled and removed by the Public Works Division.

Financial Implications:

Financial impact to current year operating budget:

The removal of the bridge will create savings in the current year's operating budget by eliminating the need for replacement funding.

Financial impact on future year operating budget:

Annual structural maintenance and bi-annual inspections will no longer be required.

Link to asset management plan and strategy:

The removal of the pedestrian footbridge will lead to its removal from the City's asset inventory. This will result in removing from the City's planned replacements and savings for the reserve fund for this asset.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Developing our Resources

Optimizing Stratford's physical assets and digital resources. Planning a sustainable future for Stratford's resources and environment.

Alignment with One Planet Principles:

Health and Happiness

Encouraging active, social, meaningful lives to promote good health and wellbeing.

Culture and Community

Nurturing local identity and heritage, empowering communities and promoting a culture of sustainable living.

Land and Nature

Protecting and restoring land for the benefit of people and wildlife.

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Shakespeare Gardens Island Pedestrian Footbridge Removal" (ITS25-009), be received for information.

Prepared by: Nathan Bottema, Project Engineer

Recommended by: Taylor Crinklaw, Director of Infrastructure

Adam Betteridge, Interim Chief Administrative Officer