

NKY Chamber: Policy Position- Brent Spence Bridge Corridor  
Rehabilitation/Replacement

For over a decade, the Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) has advocated for a new Brent Spence Bridge (BSB), including related improvements along the I-75 Corridor. The Chamber recognizes that a new BSB will increase the region's economic competitiveness, deliver needed infrastructure to spur investment and job creation, and remedy the current safety hazard the existing Corridor represents.

The Chamber has based its position to develop a new, and rehabilitate the old, BSB upon the following facts:

1. The existing BSB is dangerous.
  - a. The BSB ranks 7<sup>th</sup> among interstate highway bridges for crashes nationally.
  - b. Three people have died on the Bridge since 2003, many others have died on approaches to the Bridge, and numerous accidents have occurred along the Corridor, which has resulted in significant personal and property damages, and major traffic delays.
  - c. The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet has stated that motorists are 3-5 times more likely to have a wreck along the Corridor than any other interstate section in Kentucky, Ohio or Indiana.
  - d. Covington police respond to an average of 650 accidents, disabled vehicles, and other vehicle-related issues on the Bridge each year. These incidents average a one-hour response time due to the dangers and congestion on the Bridge. This delay is in part due to the fact that the Bridge does not have emergency lanes.
2. The BSB is functionally obsolete.
  - a. The BSB was designed to accommodate an average flow of 80,000 vehicles per day. It is currently handling more than twice that volume. In 2025, that number is expected to exceed 200,000: more than triple its capacity.
  - b. When opened, the BSB contained 3 traffic lanes in each direction and emergency lanes on both decks. To accommodate the increased traffic volume, all emergency lanes were removed and another traffic lane added on both decks. By adding these traffic lanes, the width of the lanes was reduced from 12' to 11', a foot short of Federal Highway Administration requirements.
  - c. Due to the over-capacity traffic, removal of emergency lanes and reduction in appropriate lane width, the United States Department of Transportation has labeled the BSB as "functionally obsolete".
3. The BSB is the most important economic development issue facing the region.
  - a. Based on traffic studies conducted by OKI, rush-hour commutes will be extended by not just minutes, but hours due to gridlock in the future.

- b. A 30-minute commute from CVG Airport to downtown Cincinnati will turn into a 1 hour, 43 minute average commute in 2025.
- c. The travel time from Florence to downtown Cincinnati during rush hour will increase from 35 minutes currently to 65 minutes in 2025.
- d. As congestion increases and the ability for residents to access their jobs in a timely manner decreases, the Northern Kentucky economy will be negatively impacted.
- e. The gridlock predicted for the Brent Spence Bridge will have a negative impact on growth and progress in Northern Kentucky, lost income, wasted fuel, reduced employment and inefficiencies in delivering goods and services to consumers.
- f. According to OKI, by building the BSB now, the economic benefit to commuters, shippers, and manufacturers is estimated to be \$18.7 billion, a return on investment of more than 500% over a 20-year period compared to the cost of the BSB.

It is recognized that the BSB project is at a critical juncture in its development because of unprecedented collaboration of Governors Beshear (Kentucky) and Kasich (Ohio) to prioritize the project. The Chamber further recognizes that the 2014 Kentucky General Assembly is the time at which many pivotal decisions will need to be made towards the finalization of approval to move forward with the project.

The Chamber makes the following recommendations to members of the 2014 Kentucky General Assembly:

1. *Protect the approximately \$60 million allocated in the Governor's Road Plan and work towards securing more dollars for the BSB in this Road Plan and/or future transportation budgets.*
2. *Adopt Public-Private Partnership legislation as submitted in House Bill 407.*
3. *Assure the project scope includes secondary transportation needs for Northern Kentucky communities.*
4. *While the Chamber has worked for years to obtain direct Federal and State funding for BSB, based on the facts available, BSB will not happen without alternative funding for the project, including tolls. Therefore, the Chamber requests that any tolls, or alternative financing methods used to pay for the BSB, be used only for construction, maintenance and operations of the BSB and not allocated to any other project, and that upon retirement of the debt service on the BSB, tolls or alternative financing methods be withdrawn.*
5. *Require that any tolling schedule be similar to that of the Louisville-Southern Indiana Ohio River Bridges project.*
6. *Urge Northern Kentucky's federal delegation to allocate additional dollars towards the BSB either through discretionary appropriation or if the federal government were to develop a sustainable method of funding mega-infrastructure projects like the BSB.*

By approval of the NKY Chamber Board of Directors, this resolution will be sent to all members of the Kentucky General Assembly, Governor Steve Beshear, and Kentucky Transportation Cabinet Secretary Mike Hancock.