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City to Close McBride Viaduct

(ERIE, PA – May 20, 2010) Mayor Sinnott announced at a 10:30 AM press conference this morning, the City of Erie will close the McBride Viaduct (East Avenue Bridge) between East 12th Street and East 19th Street on **Wednesday, June 2, 2010 at 10:00 a.m.** At this time, the closing shall be considered temporary to complete the final evaluation of the bridge and to determine its disposition.

PennDOT requires local bridges to be inspected every two years, and a report must be filed with the District following each inspection. Bridge inspections are performed by the City of Erie Bureau of Engineering, under a reimbursement agreement with PennDOT. The most recent required inspections occurred in November 2007 and November 2009. The Bureau of Engineering also conducted an interim annual inspection in 2008.

From late 2007 to the present, the Bureau of Engineering has performed detailed inspections and analyses to determine the extent of the deterioration and cost estimates for rehabilitation. Deck and joint repair maintenance projects were completed in late 2007 and again in late 2009, at a total cost of \$17,650. The deterioration now appears to be much more extensive. The Bureau has concerns about the deck and substructure (columns and pier caps).

In December 2009, Urban Engineers was hired to conduct an independent expert inspection of the bridge and concurred with the findings of the Bureau of Engineering. Urban has confirmed that “the bridge has experienced major deterioration and will require significant repair work to maintain its current carrying capacity. The structure has experienced advanced deterioration from multiple freeze-thaw cycles caused by moisture penetrating the superstructure and piers.” Significant rehabilitation will be necessary to restore the bridge to its intended load carrying capacity. Unless rehabilitation measures are performed in the near future, this structure will continue to deteriorate to a point where it will be unsafe for the traveling public to use.

Originally constructed in the late 1930's, the bridge was rehabilitated in 1971 replacing the original piers and superstructure. Part of the original bridge was maintained at that time and remained in service.

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The bridge was posted Friday, October 24, 2008 with a 22 ton weight limit which allows cars, buses, fire trucks, plow trucks and the like. Tri-axles, compactors, tractor-trailers are now excluded from using the bridge. Most recent Average Daily Traffic (ADT) count is 4,562 (October 22, 2008).

The Bureau of Police and the Bureau of Fire were consulted regarding public safety response times. With some minor adjustments to operations, the bridge is not required to provide adequate response times. The adjacent bridge on the East Side connector provides access over the railroad tracks with minimal detour. Travel times are not significantly affected. Pedestrian facilities on the adjacent bridge are far more accessible and much safer.

The most recent inspection revealed additional deterioration following the freeze and thaw cycles of this past winter, this deterioration prompted the closing of the bridge. All alternatives are being evaluated to determine the final disposition of the bridge. This temporary closing may evolve into a permanent closing and demolition as the most important consideration is the safety of the travelling public on and under the bridge. The Bureau of Engineering will formulate the safest, most cost effective solution while attempting to minimize impact and time delays on the travelling public. The goal of the analysis is to maintain a comparable level of service while maximizing safety.

Discussions are planned with local businesses regarding possible concerns. A public meeting will be scheduled and advertised soon. Individuals having comments are encouraged to contact the Bureau of Engineering at 870-1370.

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