

RI LANDMARKS

# Bridge to nowhere no more: Railroad bridge jutting into Seekonk River from East Providence to be removed

The Army Corps of Engineers could demolish the India Point Railroad Bridge this winter. City leaders say doing so will open up economic development opportunities for the waterfront.

By [Brian Amaral](#) Globe Staff, Updated July 18, 2022, 1:20 p.m.



The remaining portion of the long-disused India Point Railroad Bridge juts into the Seekonk River from East Providence. DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF

**EAST PROVIDENCE** — For decades, this rusty old half of a train bridge to nowhere has served only as an obstacle for boaters and a platform for teenage trespassers and mischief-makers.

Soon it will be gone: The Army Corps of Engineers has agreed to remove the India Point Railroad Bridge, which juts out from the East Providence Yacht Club's patio into the middle of the Seekonk River.

Unlike the Crook Point Bascule Bridge just upriver, which rears up like a T-rex to announce the arrival of the Providence metro area skyline, and whose supporters include the City of Providence, few will mourn the India Point Railroad Bridge's demise.

East Providence Councilman Bob Rodericks has advocated for removing the bridge for several years. "This was a roadblock to our success," Rodericks said on a recent visit to the area. "And an eyesore."





East Providence Councilman Bob Rodericks looks forward to the possibilities once the India Point Railroad Bridge is removed. DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF

Army Corps spokesman Bryan Purtell said a contract to remove the bridge and other associated obstructions is expected to be awarded in the fall. Demolition would occur in the winter. An exact amount to remove it hasn't been determined but the ballpark estimate is between \$1 million to \$5 million, Purtell said.

The removal of the bridge has been in the works for decades. Its history as a bridge goes back to 1835; the more or less current version was built around the early 1900s. But it hasn't been used for trains in half a century, and the federal government has had off-and-on plans to remove it since the 1980s. It was a swing bridge, meaning one part swung open to allow boats to pass, or closed to allow trains to cross.

In the early 2000s, the federal government removed the part of the bridge that connected to Providence, including the part that swung open. But the funding wasn't available to remove the span that connects to the East Providence waterfront. So it has remained there.

Now, two decades later, the Army Corps, which took ownership of the span, is preparing to take out the rest. It took some doing: Before the bridge was removed, the East Providence Yacht Club needed to temporarily move some of its pilings to make room for the project. That, the feds would not pay for.

That's where the city stepped in. The East Providence Economic Development Commission provided the East Providence Yacht Club with a loan that could be worth up to \$50,000 to pay for it. It's a loan, not a grant, but it is interest-free for five years. That will allow the yacht club to temporarily remove the pilings and clear a path, literally, for the project to move forward.

Mikel Perry, the owner of the East Providence Yacht Club, said removing the bridge will allow his business to expand after doing some dredging work. He'd wanted to expand his business out onto the bridge, maybe putting down a glass floor and setting up chairs, but the feds said that was too much of a hazard. Now the hazard will be gone entirely.

“We’ll have a much better view from the club,” Perry said.

(The yacht club, for what it’s worth, is not as fancy as its name might imply. Perry describes it as a cozy and unpretentious social environment that’s open to the public. It still retains a down-to-earth spirit after a 2019 remodel, with a sign inside with the word “Bar” upside down, and a clock that lists its numbers counterclockwise.)

City officials, meanwhile, say removing the bridge will play a role in the broader improvements to the East Providence waterfront — including a [new entertainment venue and port](#) — as well as nearby Watchemoket Square.

“There’s a lot of great things happening on our waterfront,” Mayor Bob DaSilva said in an interview.

“The whole area, with the entertainment and tourism aspects — we expect it to be a big draw for the city,” added Bill Fazioli, director of the East Providence Planning and Economic Development Office.

The deal didn’t come with any public access guarantees or easements, but city officials said it will open up the area in general and allow, for example, a new kayak launch.

In Providence, across the river, the city has worked to preserve the Crook Point Bascule Bridge, which is fixed in the upright position. According to a recent report in The Providence Journal, though, that project is [now on hold](#).

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