



# ALLEGHENY COUNTY

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February 1, 2022

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## **Roberto Clemente (Sixth Street) Bridge to Close February 14 for Rehabilitation** *Locks to be Donated to Industrial Arts Workshop for Reuse*

**PITTSBURGH** – The Department of Public Works announced today that the Roberto Clemente (Sixth Street) Bridge in the City of Pittsburgh will close to vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic beginning at 6 a.m. on Monday, February 14, 2022. The closure, which is expected to end in December 2023, is required for a \$34.4 million bridge rehabilitation project.

Outbound vehicle traffic will be [detoured](#) using Fort Duquesne Boulevard, the Andy Warhol (Seventh Street) Bridge, Sandusky Street, East Lacock Street, and Federal Street. Inbound vehicle traffic will be [detoured](#) using East General Robinson Street, Sandusky Street, the Andy Warhol Bridge, and Fort Duquesne Boulevard. Bicycle and pedestrian traffic will be [detoured](#) using Fort Duquesne Boulevard, the Andy Warhol Bridge, and Isabella Street.

The Three Rivers Heritage Trail will remain open near the bridge – on the North Shore and Downtown – for the duration of the project.

The approximately 11,000 locks on the bridge will be removed and donated to the Industrial Arts Workshop of Hazelwood. The nonprofit organization teaches students of all ages about sculpture creation and artistic literacy, including the fundamentals of welding, design, engineering principles, and safety standards. The school also promotes collaboration and teamwork, career readiness, as well as community service and engagement.

“The Clemente Bridge is an iconic symbol of Pittsburgh, and one that visitors and residents alike are familiar, but it too needs some love,” said County Executive Rich Fitzgerald. “This significant infrastructure investment will complete the rehabilitation of the third Sister Bridge and also allows the opportunity for a unique, sustainable reuse of the many locks that have been added to the bridge over the years.”

Industrial Arts Workshop Executive Director Tim Kaulen has not yet determined what will be created using the locks and where that art might be displayed upon completion. Kaulen specializes in the creation of large-scale public art. Among his well-known pieces are the black geese painted atop the county-owned Philip Murray (South Tenth Street) Bridge.

“I am excited for the opportunity to receive the locks, which are individual expressions from so many people who placed their thoughts and wishes in public,” said Kaulen. “It doesn’t take much imagination to visualize the web of connections between these locks and the journeys they took to reach such a special place in our community. I look forward to using the locks in a future public artwork that pays tribute to their origins and what brought them together on the Roberto Clemente Bridge.”

After receiving feedback about the locks during a public comment period in July for the bridge rehabilitation project, the county explored how the locks might be reused as opposed to disposed of during construction. It reached out to several local entities for guidance and found an enthusiastic partner in the Industrial Arts Workshop.

“We worked with Mr. Kaulen to have the geese repainted during our recent Philip Murray Bridge rehabilitation project, and we are thrilled he is willing to partner with the county again,” said Stephen

Shanley, P.E., Public Works Director. “Our department is constantly looking for ways to mitigate our projects’ impact on the environment, so finding a way for the locks to be reused was a top priority for us. We can’t wait to see how the Industrial Arts Workshop ends up using the locks.”

Residents and visitors who placed locks on the Roberto Clemente Bridge are encouraged to remove them before the start of construction. The locks that remain after construction begins will eventually be cut off of the bridge’s handrails.

Public Works requests that residents and visitors stop placing locks on the Roberto Clemente Bridge and other county-owned bridges. The locks can damage bridge railings, add extra weight to the railings than they were designed to hold, and are expensive and time-consuming to remove in bulk.

The current railings on Roberto Clemente Bridge were installed in 2000 and are still in good condition. They will be removed, repainted, and reinstalled as part of the project. When the railings need to be replaced during a future project, Public Works plans to explore designs that discourage both graffiti and lock placement.

“The Roberto Clemente Bridge is one of the most beautiful bridges and locations in the country, so we understand why couples might want to symbolize their love by placing a lock there,” said Shanley. “That being said, our mission is to protect this important public asset from damage and to keep it as beautiful as possible. The locks make that job more difficult and costly.”

The Roberto Clemente Bridge project will include repairs to the structural steel, repairs to the concrete/masonry substructure, replacement of the concrete deck and sidewalks, replacement of the expansion dams, refurbishment of the pylons, repairs to the stairs on the downtown side, improvements to drainage, repainting of the bridge and handrails Aztec Gold, replacement of the navigational lighting, replacement of the street lighting to resemble its original appearance from the 1920s, replacement of the electric and gas utility lines under the bridge, and replacement of the delineator posts used to separate the bicycle lanes from the vehicle lanes.

Additionally, cleaning of the exposed masonry surfaces on the Roberto Clemente, Andy Warhol, and Rachel Carson Bridges will be done along with placement of rock scour protection around the Roberto Clemente Bridge and Rachel Carson Bridge piers in the Allegheny River. Also, the handrails on the bridge side of Fort Duquesne Boulevard will be repainted Aztec Gold.

The project will be done by Mosites Construction and Development Company of Robinson. Funding is coming from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), and Allegheny County.

This is the third Sister Bridges rehabilitation project. It follows the \$25.4 million Andy Warhol Bridge rehabilitation project in 2016-17 and the \$23.3 million Rachel Carson Bridge rehabilitation project in 2019-20. Unlike those projects, the Roberto Clemente Bridge rehabilitation project will not result in a new lane configuration. It will continue to have two lanes – one in each direction – for vehicle traffic and two bicycle lanes.

The Roberto Clemente Bridge, which opened in 1928, carries 7,895 vehicles daily across the Allegheny River. The Sister Bridges are the only trio of identical bridges in the world and the first self-anchored suspension bridges in the United States.

The bridge was last inspected in 2021. The deck, superstructure, and substructure are all rated 5, or in “fair” condition. The report states that the bridge’s “... primary structural elements are sound ...”

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