

## IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **KDOT, City of Topeka taking additional actions in response to fallen concrete barrier on the Polk-Quincy Viaduct**

KDOT continues to examine what caused a portion of the concrete barrier to fall off the Polk-Quincy Viaduct and has hired a national bridge expert to help with the investigation. The preliminary determination was the 60-foot concrete barrier that fell into a vacant parking lot in downtown on Saturday, June 11, was likely caused by deterioration of the steel that connects the concrete barrier to the viaduct deck. This deterioration combined with high temperatures caused the concrete barrier to break adjacent to an expansion joint of the viaduct.

Following further review, the deterioration of the reinforcing steel in the railing is more severe than initially thought. In response, KDOT has asked the City of Topeka to **close 2<sup>nd</sup> Street from the alley between SE Quincy Street and S Kansas Avenue to the west side of SW Van Buren, which means SW Jackson Street and S Kansas Avenue will be also closed under the viaduct.** Detour map available below.

These closures will remain in effect until the concrete barrier can be removed and replaced on the viaduct. Work on the barrier will begin by June 30. KDOT will prioritize fixing the barrier directly over Kansas and Jackson Avenues to reduce the traffic disruption as much as possible.

“Keeping drivers and pedestrians safe is our top priority,” said KDOT Secretary Julie Lorenz. “We are taking these additional actions out of an abundance of caution for travelers and will work diligently to make these safety improvements as quickly as possible.”

It’s important to note the concerns are with the concrete barrier on the Polk-Quincy Viaduct -- not the structure of the viaduct, which is why it remains open to traffic.

KDOT’s investigation has also included an internal review of KDOT’s bridge inspection process. During that review, KDOT discovered the May 23, 2022, inspection of the Polk-Quincy Viaduct did not follow protocols. The inspector saw warning signs that the bridge joint was expanding, but failed to notify KDOT’s bridge inspection leader, which is required per the protocol. The bridge inspector responsible for the error has resigned.

There are 332 bridges across Kansas whose barriers and railings are similarly designed to the Polk-Quincy Viaduct. KDOT has called for additional inspections of all those bridges. The bridges that span over traffic, approximately 105 of them, will be inspected first. Again, the

concern about these bridges is the barrier or railings not the bridge structure. Inspections are underway now on bridges with this type of barrier, to verify the accuracy of recent inspections.

KDOT has also launched an external audit of all bridge inspections, including those made by the inspector who reviewed the Polk-Quincy Viaduct, to make sure similar issues have not occurred on other bridges. As part of this process, a national bridge expert will review KDOT internal processes and make recommendations of how to strengthen protocols going forward.

These actions add to previous actions taken by the KDOT:

- KDOT's State Bridge Engineer and Senior Inspection Engineer and our consultant have completed multiple inspections of the site and have determined the cause to be an issue with the concrete barrier alone. The structure of the viaduct remains sound and open to traffic. Staff have continued to inspect the site twice daily since Monday, June 13, to watch for any changes that would require additional actions to be taken.
- Dump trucks were placed on the viaduct to serve as a temporary barrier until a new concrete safety barrier could be installed. The barrier was installed on Tuesday, June 14.

KDOT will provide ongoing updates on the replacement of barrier and traffic impacts.

**Detour map and information:**

### Topeka City Street Closures

**INTERSTATE 70 I-70 REMAINS OPEN**

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) requested the closure of several City streets in downtown Topeka due to safety concerns specific to the railing of the Polk-Quincy Viaduct. KDOT reports the I-70 bridge roadway maintains its structural integrity, and is safe to drive on.

The closure of 2nd St. from just west of SW Van Buren St. to just east of S Kansas Ave. was made out of an abundance of caution for the safety of drivers and pedestrians near and under the viaduct. This closure is effective immediately. **Detours are posted.**

Legend:  
— Designated Detour  
⊗ City Street Closures (2nd St. is closed under the bridge.)

Kansas Department of Transportation logo and seal.

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