

Historic Carrollton Covered Bridge reopens following extensive repairs

By Mike Nolting
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BARBOUR COUNTY, W.Va. – The restoration of the Carrollton Covered Bridge in Barbour County is substantially complete and has reopened to traffic.

State DOH District 7 Bridge Engineer Chad Boram said crews from the district completed the work following an arson in 2017.



Work on the bridge has been taking place for months. (Photo/WVDOH)

“It did very significant damage to the structure,” Boram said. “It took some time to assess and figure out if and how we could do that.”

Work began in July 2022 by the DOH crew of about six workers using plans developed by a consultant. Originally, the work was going to go out for bid to be completed by a contractor, but the decision was made to do the work in-house.

The project is valued at about \$1 million and was funded by the federal government.

“It was much more extensive than what we originally thought we were going to have to do,” Boram said. “Many, many of the main truss members had to be replaced, and that really wasn’t the plan.”

The crew spent the last several months doing custom work to replace burned timbers in some cases and reshape new timbers to fit in the existing structure in other areas. The construction

process was a learning experience for Boram and the crew to engineer and rebuild the historic structure.

“It was definitely a learning experience; you can’t go to Lowes to get the materials you need for a project like this,” Boram said. “We acquired the lumber from the lumber yard, and we had to have it cut to specific dimensions to match what was there on the structure.”

The crew is expected to tackle repairs to the Walkersville Covered Bridge with their newly gained knowledge next, and Boram said other districts in the state might call on their expertise.

“It’s almost like two types of structures in one—an arch and a truss together at the same time,” Boram said. “So, determining how to brace up members and how to replace members can be a little complex, but we were able to work through it.”

The bridge was built in 1856 by brothers Emmett and Daniel O’Brien and crosses the Buckhannon River near Carrollton. At 140 feet, it is one of the longest surviving covered bridges in West Virginia. The bridge was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1981.

“It was an honor to work on the project,” Boram said. “There were times we weren’t really sure if we could make it happen, but we worked through it and got it done.”

The scaffolding used during construction will remain in place until the supplier is able to remove it. After removal, Boram said there are some minor repairs that will be made to completely finish the work.

