

City of Kingsport

Bays Mountain Park and Planetarium

Tourism Enhancement Grant – Floating Bridge

Project Description

The floating bridge along Bays Mountain's Lakeside Trail is a vital link that provides accessible passage through one of the park's most scenic and well-used trails. Originally built over 25 years ago, this wooden bridge is now facing structural decline and is no longer aligned with future Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) standards.

The bridge's flotation system currently uses foam, which will be noncompliant by 2033. TDEC requires the use of plastic buoy systems going forward. In addition, the bridge has significant rot and damage to its wooden structure. Repeated exposure to the elements has created an unsafe tilt in the decking.



Looking toward the lower Lakeside Trail, the lean in the bridge's structure is visible.

The bridge's decking and support beams are visibly cracked and weakened. This condition requires constant repairs costing the park approximately \$5,000 annually.





Current flotation relies on exposed foam elements, which will no longer meet state standards by 2033. Transitioning to plastic flotation is essential for compliance.





Visitor Experience and Accessibility:

The floating bridge allows guests to bypass a difficult 2.5-mile detour around the lake and continue enjoying the Lakeside Trail. It enhances trail accessibility for all ages and abilities, especially families and older adults. Approximately one-third of all park visitors use this bridge. Without it, many would be limited in how far they can explore and experience the full beauty of the park.

Project Benefits:

- Safety: Eliminates hazards from rotten wood and structural tilt.
- Environmental Compliance: Meets TDEC flotation requirements by 2033.
- Tourism Enhancement: Maintains a key feature used by tens of thousands of visitors annually.
- Preservation: Protects a historic and functional component of the park's trail system.

The Floating Bridge Rehabilitation Project at Bays Mountain Park is essential to sustaining the accessibility, safety, and enjoyment of this beloved regional asset. Support through the Tourism Enhancement Grant will ensure this structure remains safe and compliant while continuing to serve the public for decades to come.