



The Brighton Bridge

— A Legacy of Connectivity —



The Brighton Bridge seen from Central Parkway

The “Grand Boulevard”

The 1907 Kessler Plan, written and designed by landscape architect George Kessler regarding the development of a city park system for Cincinnati, included a vision to create Central Parkway as a “grand boulevard” meant to rival Boston’s Commonwealth Avenue and the grand boulevards of Europe. He envisioned Cincinnatians strolling along a landscaped parkway lined with graceful brownstones and mansions, decorative lampposts, fountains, trees, and benches as it wound its way north from the downtown business district to the residential neighborhood of Clifton.

As plans evolved, the 1917 Bauer Bill passed which authorized the formation of the Rapid Transit Commission for the design and construction of a rapid transit system. Since the one could not commence before the other was underway, the Commission was tasked with the construction of both the Cincinnati Subway and Central Parkway, designed to replace the Miami & Erie Canal.

Before the parkway and subway tunnel construction could begin, the contractors had the daunting task of draining and clearing the canal of water and debris.

This overlapping path began east of Walnut Street at the Reading Road and Eggleston Avenue intersection running west past Main, Vine, Race and Elm Streets to the Plum Street curve, where it would head north past Liberty Street and past Marshall Place, then under Brighton Bridge and past Marhawk Avenue and Hopple Street to Ludlow Avenue. At this point, the subway path beneath would exit the old canal’s path and emerge above on open track continuing its route east through St. Bernard and Norwood and on toward Oakley.



Tearing down Brighton Bridge and clearing canal



Construction of subway tunnels at Brighton

The Brighton Bridge

Construction of the subway, Section Four, commenced in 1921 by the Fred R. Jones Contractors. Section Four extended from Mohawk Street to Brighton’s Corner, which included the underground Brighton Station and above ground Brighton Bridge.

The existing iron bridge, shown to the left, was removed in order to complete construction of the subway and underground station. A temporary track and footbridge were erected until a new bridge could be built in its place.

During construction of the Brighton Station and portions of the tunnel, the Bellevue Brewery and several other structures were damaged requiring foundations to be reinforced and stabilized. Additionally, several houses and buildings were razed, including the Brighton Hotel. The Brighton Bank building, also shown to the left, was left unscathed and remains today at the Colerain approach to the bridge.

Once the construction of Brighton Station and the tunnels were completed in 1926, a new Brighton Bridge was erected to reconnect Colerain and McMicken Avenues.

Although Central Parkway was completed and opened to the public in October, 1928, there were many obstacles that prevented the completion of the subway system and diminished the importance of the parkway as a front for major residential, civic and commercial development. In addition, construction of the Millcreek Expressway and I-75 severely limited accessibility to the area.



Construction wraps up on the new bridge and the subway that runs below

New Developments

Over the past decade, commercial and residential development along the “grand boulevard” have been on the upswing, including DePaul Cristo Rey High School, the School for Creative and Performing Arts, the Kroger Company headquarters, TQL Stadium, and Hard Rock Casino. Restoration and adapted reuse of some buildings has seen a rise, including distilleries, taprooms, coffee houses, and residential centers consisting of small studio apartments and condominiums.

In 2024, due to widespread deterioration, construction began to replace the existing Brighton Bridge with a new span for vehicles, pedestrians, and bikes. Having undergone substantial repairs in 1948, 1976, and 1992, the bridge had reached the end of its useful life and could no longer feasibly be repaired. The City of Cincinnati Department of Transportation & Engineering (DOTE) made the decision to replace the bridge after studying various alternatives and considering feedback from a variety of stakeholders including area residents, community councils, and neighborhood associations. The new bridge pays tribute to the old through various architectural elements, such as the railing and lighting. The new design meets modern standards for safety, strength, and durability, and will continue to serve as an important physical and visual connection in the neighborhood for decades to come.



Central Parkway subway tunnels north of Brighton



Railing construction along Central Parkway north of Brighton

