

**LBMM embankment wall removal
FAQ
4.13.2023**

Embankment as part of RPM Phase One

Q. What was the original plan for the embankment wall as part of RPM Phase One?

A. RPM Phase One is building a new bridge structure above the current century-old embankment. The new bridge is being built above the embankment because the bridge needs to be higher to meet modern bridge clearance standards. The old embankment will no longer be used for rail operations. Our intent had been to repair and patch the existing embankment wall because it was less impactful to residents near the Red Line tracks.

Q. Why did the CTA originally plan to keep the embankment wall?

A. Repairing and leaving the wall in place would mean fewer near-term impacts to residents near the Red Line tracks – fewer demolition activities, less truck traffic, etc.

Q. Why has CTA now decided to remove the embankment wall?

A. The CTA made the decision to remove nearly all of the wall, rather than a partial demolition, after determining during RPM work that the 100-year-old embankment wall is more deteriorated than anticipated. Its condition prevents the aesthetic improvements to the walls planned in RPM Phase One from having either the appearance or lifespan that were intended. By removing the wall now, while construction is already occurring in the community, residents will not undergo wall demolition in the future.

Q. What specifically did you see that led you to the conclusion that the wall was in worse shape than you thought?

A. The embankment structure was built in the 1920s and has inadequate drainage systems within the embankment and underlying soil along the embankment. The lack of adequate drainage becomes most pronounced during winter months when the combined impact of drainage issues and winter freezing and thawing contribute to deterioration in the embankment. Repairs were attempted, but the depth and extent of these areas greatly reduced how long the repairs would last.

Q. Why didn't CTA know this before the project was started? Did CTA miss something?

A. The RPM Phase One project is the largest section of rail embankment to be rehabilitated/rebuilt in CTA history. Though analysis and testing was completed ahead of construction, the full extent of deterioration and what could be done to improve drainage and other functionality was made clearer only after we removed portions of the embankment and began repairs.

We have elected to proactively remove nearly all of the remaining embankment now as part of the RPM Phase One project rather than prolong the inevitable and cause unnecessary inconveniences to residents in the future.

To patch and repair the wall now would only solve the problem for a few years and require us to do ongoing remediation work and eventual embankment removal in the future, at additional disruption to the community.

Q. Where will embankment be removed and what embankment will remain between W Leland and W Ardmore (the boundaries for the Lawrence-to-Bryn-Mawr Modernization portion of RPM Phase One)?

A. The contractor has already removed some of the existing embankment to build new support columns for the new structure. In fact, about half of the entire embankment was to be removed to make room for new track columns and new stationhouses. Of the remaining embankment, most of it will be removed. The exceptions are:

- Leland to Lawrence. There will be no open space in this section. Some of the embankment structure is newer at this location and therefore doesn't need to be removed, with the exception of about 300-500 feet for the new Lawrence station auxiliary exit.
- North of the new track bridge between Ardmore and Thorndale. Reconstruction of that area of track structure would be part of a future phase of RPM.

Embankment wall removal and impact to the community

Q. What methods will be used to remove the wall?

A. Demolition methods will be similar to the demolition of northbound Red and Purple track structure during Stage A in 2021. Material will be demolished and/or excavated from its location with hammers and grinders. The material will then be loaded into trucks with excavators and loaders and transported offsite for disposal.

Q. What's in the embankment fill? Are there dangerous materials in the embankment, such as asbestos? How will the community be kept safe from harmful dust/particles?

A. Similar to the work completed in 2021 for Stage A, the embankment includes rocks, dirt and other debris. Qualified abatement contractors whose work is monitored, contained, and disposed of under the oversight of abatement professionals following local and federal laws will properly handle some non-airborne asbestos. Additionally, dust from the demolition and excavation activities is monitored and controlled by spraying water on the activity followed by a street sweeper on public roads and alleys.

Q. How long will it take to remove the wall?

A. The partial demolition of the embankment has taken approximately seven months to complete in Stage A, we anticipate the full demolition of the embankment into Stage B to take 10-12 months.

Q. Will the entire wall be removed?

A. Most of it, yes. During Stage A work, about 40 percent of the east embankment wall has already been removed to make room for new stationhouses at Lawrence, Argyle, Berwyn and

Bryn Mawr and for construction ramps that have been put into place to allow the contractor to move materials and equipment onto the tracks from ground level.

Q. How does the community benefit from having the embankment removed?

A. It is a rare opportunity to be able to create new, public space in a highly populated community like the Lawrence-to-Bryn Mawr area. This work will remove barriers that have physically divided the community for a century by opening up space that didn't previously exist.

Removing the embankment will provide more open space in the area underneath our tracks that can be used to provide additional parking or other community uses. By removing it now, rather than waiting several years, we resolve the problem now while we are already performing construction activities in the community.

Q. In future phases of RPM, will embankment have to be removed?

A. Future phases of the project are still in the planning stages. Removal of embankment structure in additional areas would be contemplated as part of the planning process moving forward.

Q. Has CTA ever removed rail embankment before?

A. We've removed about 40 percent of the embankment between Lawrence and Bryn Mawr as part of this project. When we remove the rest of it, it will by far be the most embankment we have ever removed.

Q. Are other embankments along the Red and Purple lines safe for rail service? Do they need to be removed now?

A. Yes, all CTA rail structures including embankments are regularly inspected and maintained. Specifically, our rail viaducts are thoroughly inspected every two years by qualified structural inspectors. The embankment walls are given a detailed structural assessment every six years, but also receive a concrete seasonal inspection that tests them for deterioration. Defects are prioritized and repaired based on their severity as a factor of risk. If an embankment wall showed any sign that it wasn't safe, we wouldn't run trains on it.

Q. What impact will the wall removal have on the community and what is CTA doing to lessen the impact?

A. We are committed to reducing the impacts to the community as much as possible. The impacts include:

- Demolition. Demolition equipment sizes and types are selected to minimize vibration and noise.
- Dust. Dust control includes continual watering during demolition/excavation, street sweeping and ground personnel performing hand cleanup.
- Truck traffic. The contractor will meter truck traffic to avoid traffic backups, and traffic will be assisted by street flaggers.
- Alley closures. Alley closures will generally be held to daily closures and trucks/equipment can be moved to provide residents some alley access as it's possible.
- Street closures. Street closures will be coordinated with alley closures to minimize local and area traffic impacts.

- Overnight work for demolition/excavation. This work will be limited to cross-streets where weekend-only closures are required: Hollywood, Bryn Mawr, Berwyn, Foster, Argyle (weekday-only), Lawrence.
- Parking. The contractor, Walsh-Fluor, will provide alternate parking for affected residents whose parking is blocked due to alley closures.
- Garbage pickup. The contractor will make sure that affected residents garbage and recycling pickups occur.

Cost and timeline

Q. What is the cost to remove the wall? Will the project be over budget because of the wall removal?

A. The RPM Phase One project's \$2.1 billion project budget can absorb the additional cost of removing the embankment. At this time, we are working with our contractor to determine how this work will proceed and the cost of the additional work.

Q. Does the wall removal delay completion of the project?

A. It will alter the timing of some of the construction phasing including the opening of the permanent stations; however, we still expect to complete the project in 2025.

Q. When will the new stations open?

A. We estimate that the stations will open in 2025. The specific opening dates will be announced in advance and aren't yet known.

Q. So the project is delayed, then, if the stations are opening later than 2024?

A. We will still deliver this project on time and on budget. The project is still expected to be completed in 2025, including the new modern, fully accessible Red Line stations we have promised. The earlier station opening timetable was an estimate that was made before construction began, before COVID, and before discovering the extent of the embankment's condition.

After the embankment is gone

Q. Where are the materials disposed of?

A. They are trucked and disposed of at an off-site, approved location.

Q. How will the space be used? Does the community have input into how the space is used?

A. We are actively working with the community to determine the best use for the available space underneath. We will hold community meetings in June 2023 to gather feedback regarding potential activations with the new open space.

Q. What are some possible uses for the space?

A. Some options could include parking and open community spaces. CTA will take the feedback from local residents and determine what is feasible.

Q. Will there be additional parking?

A. CTA has parking underneath its elevated structure in many areas of the city (such as SpotHero parking spots) and there is a strong possibility of including additional parking in this area.

Safety and security

Q. Will it be safe under the L? Will there be lighting under the L at night?

A. We are planning to install lighting under new viaducts and will look at lighting for underneath the tracks over alleys.

Q. What about the potential for increased crime under the 'L' tracks?

A. We will continue to work closely with the Chicago Police Department to keep the area around our tracks safe for the community.

Q. What about homeless encampments settling under the tracks? What will you do to keep that from happening?

We partner with the City and social service agencies, which conduct outreach to unsheltered people and provide options and access to services.

Embankment history and stats

Q. When was the embankment built and why is it not elevated steel like other parts of the Red Line?

A. The embankment was originally built in the 1920s to support heavier freight trains in addition to 'L' trains.

Q. How big is the embankment in the project area?

A. It is more than one mile long (including portions that have been already removed for construction work, 14 to 17 feet high and about 60 feet wide.

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