

Overview of Recent Bridge and Overpass Damage Events

ISSUE

Between March 5 and March 11, 2026, three separate bridge and overpass damage events occurred in Saskatoon. While there were no reported injuries with any of these events, each resulted in damage to City of Saskatoon (City) infrastructure requiring costly repairs. What was the nature of each event, what was the immediate response, and what are the next steps?

BACKGROUND

Event 1 – Highway 16 Over Highway 11 Overpass Over Height Collision

Around 5:00 p.m. on March 5, 2026, a semi-truck entering Saskatoon on Highway 11 was hauling equipment that was too large to go under the cloverleaf overpass at Highway 16 and caused significant damage to the outer edge of the eastbound structure. No injuries were reported.

Saskatoon Police Service closed all northbound traffic on Highway 11 and eastbound traffic on Highway 16 in the area and interviewed the truck driver. City staff and structural engineers attended the site immediately following the collision and determined one eastbound lane of traffic over the bridge on Highway 16 and one northbound lane of traffic under the bridge could be accommodated until further inspection and removal of loose concrete on the structure could be completed. These lanes re-opened late on the evening of March 5, 2026, once the temporary traffic set-up was in place to safely accommodate traffic through the area.

On March 6, 2026, structural engineers completed an additional inspection and assessment of the damage, and a contractor completed removal of loose concrete that could pose a safety hazard to vehicles travelling under the overpass. By late afternoon that day, all northbound lanes of Highway 11 under the overpass were re-opened.

Due to the extent of the damage to the overpass along the south side of the structure, only one eastbound lane over the overpass (the northmost eastbound lane) remains open to traffic until repairs can be completed.

Event 2 – Fire under the University Bridge

Mid-afternoon on March 8, 2026, the Saskatoon Fire Department (SFD) extinguished a small fire on the top of the arch just west of Spadina Crescent at the west (Downtown) side of the University Bridge. No injuries were reported. The Fire Investigator was unable to identify a definitive cause or source of the fire. The investigation, however, revealed there were signs of unauthorized individuals having been present in the secured area near the fire. The Fire Investigator found no evidence of tents, tarps or identifiers of sleeping in the area which would have identified an encampment.

The westbound lanes of the University Bridge were closed while the damage could be assessed. The bridge was inspected and no structural damage was found; however, the fire melted and damaged a portion of the sanitary sewer line installed under the

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west side of the bridge deck. Assessment of the damage and a repair plan for the sanitary sewer line commenced on March 8, 2026.

Two-way traffic was maintained in the eastbound lanes over the bridge until mid-morning on March 9, 2026, when all four lanes of traffic on the bridge were re-opened; however, there remained a restriction in the westbound curb lane at the east (University) side of the University Bridge to accommodate a pump connected to a sanitary sewer bypass line on the north walkway which was closed. Repairs to the sewer line were completed on March 17.

In 2025, the City invested \$256,000 installing steel mesh barriers topped with barbed wire on both sides of the University Bridge following a more damaging fire underneath the east side of the bridge in January 2025. At the time, City officials carefully considered options that would deter unauthorized access but would still allow access beneath the bridge for bridge inspections and necessary utility work.

Event 3 – 108th Street Over Circle Drive Overpass Over Height Collision

Around 5:00 p.m. on March 11, 2026, a semi-truck travelling northbound on Circle Drive East was hauling equipment that was too large to go under the overpass at 108th Street and impacted the structure causing significant damage to multiple girders, resulting in debris on Circle Drive and the temporary closure of the northbound curb lane (eastmost lane). No injuries were reported.

City staff and structural engineers attended the site immediately following the collision. A structural assessment was completed, and engineers confirmed the lanes over the overpass remained safe for continued use. Saskatoon Police Service also attended the scene and interviewed the truck driver.

On March 12, 2026, structural engineers completed an additional inspection and assessment of the damage, and a contractor completed removal of loose concrete that could pose a safety hazard to vehicles travelling under the overpass. By late afternoon that day, traffic restrictions in the northbound curb lane under the overpass were lifted.

CURRENT STATUS

The Administration's understanding is that charges were laid against both drivers by either the Saskatoon Police Service and/or the Saskatchewan Highway Patrol. These charges are prosecuted either by Provincial Crown Prosecutors, or the Traffic Prosecutors, depending on the charge. As of the writing of this report, the Administration does not have a list of charges that have been laid.

Event 1 – Highway 16 Over Highway 11 Overpass Over Height Collision

Due to the extent of the damage to the overpass along the south side of the structure, only one eastbound lane on Highway 16 over the bridge (the northmost eastbound lane) remains open to traffic until repairs can be completed. Repair work commenced onsite on March 17, 2026, and is expected to require up to four weeks to complete. During repairs, northbound traffic on Highway 11 will be limited to one lane. The estimated cost to complete the repairs is \$400,000.

Event 2 – University Bridge Fire

Repairs to the sanitary sewer line were completed on March 17. Traffic restrictions remained in place until March 18 to allow staff to safely remove the temporary bypass pipe on the pedestrian walkway. In the afternoon, the pedestrian walkway and all vehicle lanes were available for normal traffic flow.

While final invoicing has yet to be received, the estimated repair cost is \$120,000 and is being funded from existing budgets in operating for maintenance activities.

Event 3 – 108th Street Over Circle Drive Overpass Over Height Collision

Currently, there are no traffic restrictions in place on 108th Street over the bridge or Circle Drive East under the bridge.

The estimated cost of the repairs is approximately \$350,000; however, as of the time of writing, the repair design is still in progress, and the estimate may be refined as design advances.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Events 1 and 3 – Overpass Over Height Collisions

A number of activities have or are being undertaken by the Administration as a result of these collisions.

Trucking in Saskatchewan is regulated by provincial and federal legislation. There are a variety of offences under *The Highways and Transportation Act* and prescribed regulations. The fines under this *Act* for damaging a public improvement are a maximum of \$200 for a first offence and a maximum of \$500 for subsequent offences. The City has made [amendments to The Traffic Bylaw](#) in 2025, to create an offence for damaging City infrastructure. The maximum fines the City can impose in a bylaw under provincial legislation are \$10,000 for an individual and \$20,000 for a corporation. This is a maximum and the actual amount of the fine will be imposed by the Court. Charges with respect to these incidents will be up to the investigating authorities. The City has taken steps to make sure they are aware of City bylaw provisions.

The City Solicitor's Office will consider all possible legal avenues to collect damages (recover costs) from the individual and/or corporation that caused the damage. This may involve restitution through the Provincial Court or filing a statement of claim with the Court of King's Bench. The City Solicitor's Office does not yet have all the information (e.g., the Occurrence Reports) to determine the best legal avenue but will be determining this as information is received.

With the amendments made to *The Traffic Bylaw* in 2025, the City now has clearer authority to revoke annual permits when a company causes damage due to poor route planning. Daily permits would still be available, but with routes specified by the City to avoid further damage. It is the Administration's understanding that the drivers and company involved in Events 1 and 3 did not have a daily or annual Saskatoon truck permit.

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On March 13, 2026, Acting City Manager Terry Schmidt provided a letter to the Deputy Minister of Highways and Deputy Minister of Government Relations requesting a review of current provincial legislation to provide better incentives and/or deterrents for companies and drivers to mitigate against damage to public infrastructure.

The Administration also intends to approach Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI) and the Saskatchewan Trucking Association, to initiate an education and awareness campaign regarding over height hauling.

Event 2 – University Bridge Fire

The Saskatoon Emergency Management Organization (EMO) will undertake a comprehensive after-action review of the University Bridge event. The review will examine the circumstances surrounding the event and assess opportunities to further mitigate the risk of trespassing and unauthorized access.

This assessment will include engagement with relevant internal stakeholders, consultation with subject-matter experts, and jurisdictional scans with other municipalities to identify effective and sustainable practices used elsewhere to address similar risks. The review will also consider the effectiveness of existing security measures and identify potential gaps or opportunities for enhancement. It is anticipated that a layered approach to security measures will be required. Security measures that could be considered include: enhanced physical controls (barriers, restricted access zones), technological measures (intrusion detection, iCCTV cameras) operational practices (patrols, inspections) and administrative measures (interdepartmental coordination, policies and procedures). The review will include the measures that are currently in place and the requirement to maintain access for infrastructure inspections and emergency response.

The after-action review will be completed by the end of spring. Based on the findings, Administration may recommend additional security or prevention measures aimed at reducing the likelihood of future intrusions and related incidents.

Should the review identify the need for additional investments beyond existing resources, Administration would report back to Council, through the appropriate standing committee, with recommendations and any associated funding implications for consideration.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications are addressed within the body of this report.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no communications, Triple Bottom Line, policy, privacy, or CPTED implications or considerations emerging from this report. These will be considered in future reports as required.

NEXT STEPS

Subject to further direction from Council, the Administration will undertake the following next steps:

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1. Coordinate completion of the repairs to the Highway 16 over Highway 11 overpass and 108th Street over Circle Drive overpass through various existing bridge maintenance capital projects;
2. Pursue cost recovery for the overpass repairs;
3. Continue follow-up with the Province on additional legislative deterrents;
4. Pursue an over-height hauling education campaign with SGI and the Saskatchewan Trucking Association; and
5. Complete the University Bridge after-action review to determine whether further security investments should be undertaken.

Report Approval

Written by: Dan Willems, Director of Technical Services

Reviewed by: Brendan Lemke, Director of Water and Waste Operations

Pamela Goulden-McLeod, Director of Emergency Management Organization

Approved by: Terry Schmidt, Acting City Manager

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