An artist's rendering shows the proposed design of a new six-lane, cable-stayed bridge that would replace the Gerald Desmond Bridge.

# Gerald Desmond Bridge Replacement Project

## Fact Sheet

Port of LONG BEACH
The Green Port

Since its construction in 1968, the Gerald Desmond Bridge has become a vital part of the national infrastructure, with nearly 15 percent of the nation's waterborne cargo passing across the bridge. It is also a critical access route for the Port of Long Beach, downtown Long Beach and surrounding communities.

Today the 40-year-old bridge is obsolete and deteriorating. The bridge is nearing the end of its intended lifespan and was not designed to handle today's traffic volumes.

The 40-year-old Gerald Desmond Bridge faces traffic and maintenance issues.

While the bridge is safe for commuters today, it is rapidly deteriorating. The Port has had to install netting below the bridge to catch falling pieces concrete before they hit the ground and waterways below. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has given the Gerald Desmond Bridge a very low inspection rating.

In addition, the lack of emergency lanes is a major deficiency. Accidents snarl traffic for hours, delaying emergency responders and diverting vehicles into surrounding neighborhoods, creating additional traffic jams.

Even with costly maintenance, the bridge cannot be sustained long-term. Therefore the Port of Long Beach is proposing that the Gerald Desmond Bridge be demolished and replaced with a new, six-lane cable-stayed bridge adjacent to the current site. The estimated $1.1 billion cost is proposed to be paid through a combination of federal, state and local funds.

## Background

The Gerald Desmond Bridge has been designated by the U.S. Congress as a part of the National Highway System and the Federal Strategic Highway Network (National Defense Highway

Protective netting (known as a "diaper") under the bridge catches falling pieces of concrete and requires regular maintenance.

System). It is a critical structure serving the ports, the city of Long Beach, Los Angeles and Orange counties and the nation. The bridge is owned by the City of Long Beach and maintained by the Port of Long Beach.

The Gerald Desmond has several critical operational issues and maintenance challenges:

- **Traffic has exceeded capacity.** The bridge now handles up to 68,000 vehicle trips a day and about 18 million trips a year. Traffic congestion will get worse over time with continued growth in international trade and regional commuter traffic (which accounts for about 75 percent of bridge traffic).

- **Very low ratings by Caltrans inspectors.** The bridge received a low "sufficiency rating" by Caltrans, 48 out of 100. Caltrans and the federal government use this rating to determine if a bridge warrants replacement. The bridge received low marks in inspections of the concrete decks and superstructure.

- **Deteriorating physical condition.** Protective netting has been installed under sections of the bridge that stops falling pieces of concrete from hitting workers, the ground or waterways below. As the bridge ages, it is increasingly likely that Caltrans inspectors could uncover a deficiency that would require the bridge to be shut down.

## Proposed Project

The proposed bridge would include:

- Three lanes in each direction for improved traffic flow.
- Emergency lanes on both sides to reduce traffic delays and safety hazards from accidents and truck breakdowns.
- A 200-foot vertical clearance that would accommodate newer, "greener" vessels that can plug into clean, electric shore power.
- A reduction in the bridge's steep grades, for further improvements to traffic flow.

Additional proposed improvements include reconstruction of the Terminal Island East Interchange and the I-710/Gerald Desmond Bridge Interchange.

## Economic Impact

Bridge construction would provide an immediate and significant economic boost to Long Beach and the region. The $1.1 billion in spending would generate economic activity of $2.8 billion in Southern California. Construction will support, on average, 4,000 jobs a year for five years.

## Review Process

The Port released a revised draft environmental impact report for the project on Feb. 4, 2010. Public hearings are scheduled for:

- **Feb. 17** at 6 p.m. at Long Beach City Hall Council Chambers, 333 W. Ocean Blvd.
- **Feb. 24** at 6 p.m. at Silverado Park, 1545 W. 31st St.

The Port is also accepting written comments on the EIR, sent to Richard Cameron, Director of Environmental Planning, Port of Long Beach, 925 Harbor Plaza, Long Beach, CA 90802, or by e-mail to Cameron@polb.com. **Comments are due by 4:30 p.m., March 18, 2010.**

Once the review is complete and a final environmental impact report has been prepared, the Board of Harbor Commissioners will consider the report and decide whether to approve the project or another of the alternatives analyzed in the environmental impact report.

If approved, construction of the new bridge would take about six years.

For more information about this project, visit www.polb.com/bridge.