

Port Authority approves \$25 million for planning of raising Bayonne Bridge's roadbed

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By **Toni-Ann Cerbo/The Jersey Journal**



Journal file photo Port Authority of New York and New Jersey took a step closer to begin work on raising the Bayonne Bridge roadbed Wednesday when it approved an engineering contract.

The **Port Authority's** Board of Commissioners has authorized \$25 million for planning, and architectural and engineering services for the **Bayonne Bridge Navigation Project**, officials said.

On Wednesday, the board authorized a contract with HDR/PB Americas for preliminary and engineering services for the project and approved an increase in funding for the environmental consulting firm AKRF to support the environmental review process.

"Today's action by the Port Authority to help expedite the Bayonne Bridge is critical to getting this project accomplished to the benefit of the regional economy," Gov. Chris Christie said in a news release.

The roadbed of the Bayonne Bridge has to be raised to allow larger cargo ships to pass beneath it. Officials have said that if the project is not completed by 2014, when the expansion of the Panama Canal is expected to be finished, the ports beyond the bridge could become obsolete.

Ports **Newark** and **Elizabeth** support approximately 269,000 jobs in the New York-New Jersey region, and provide for \$11.2 billion in personal income, \$36.1 billion in business income, and \$5 billion in local, state and federal tax revenues, officials said.

The Port Authority's Board of Commissioners has authorized at least \$1 billion in its capital planning process to address the height problem.

The "Raise the Roadway" solution will involve the reconstruction of the existing approaches, ramps and main span roadway to a higher elevation that would allow the crossing to accommodate larger ships for years to come, officials said.