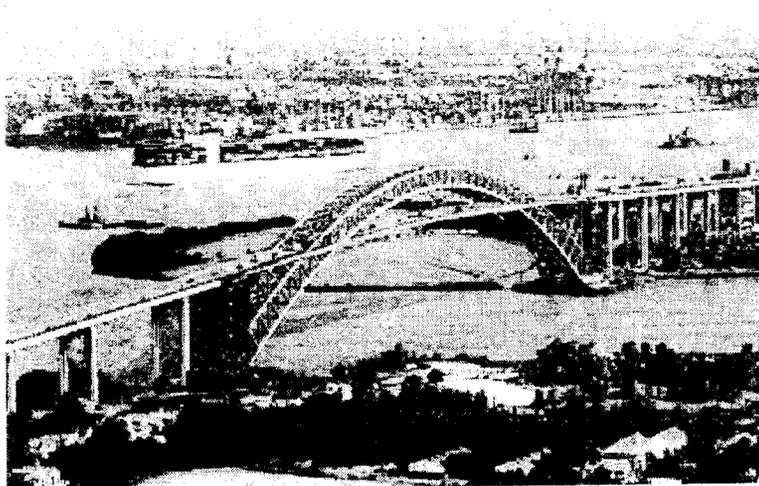


Bayonne Bridge roadbed to be raised to 215 feet, Port Authority says

Published: Wednesday, December 29, 2010, 4:13 PM Updated: Wednesday, December 29, 2010, 4:20 PM



By Ron Zeitlinger/The Jersey Journal



City of BayonneA rendering of the Bayonne Bridge after the raising of the roadbed.



City of BayonneThe clearance under the Bayonne Bridge will be raised from 151 feet to 215 feet, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey announced today.

The **Bayonne Bridge** roadbed will be raised to 215 feet, the **Port Authority of New York and New Jersey** announced today, mixing the costlier alternative of replacing the existing span.

The bridge must be raised from its current clearance height of 151 feet by 2014, when an expanded Panama Canal will allow larger ships through on their way to East Coast ports.

Port Authority Deputy Executive Director Bill Baroni said the bi-state agency, which operates the bridge, estimate the cost of raising the roadbed to be somewhere between \$1 billion and \$1.3 billion.

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DEC 29 2010

Baroni said the PA considered the alternative -- replacing the bridge with a larger one, or building a tunnel, but it found that raising the roadway was the least expensive solution.

Baroni added that this plan -- which calls for reconstruction of the existing approaches, ramps and the main span roadway -- would have the least impact on Bayonne residents and also keep intact the historic and iconic bridge.

"The bridge is critical to the circle of mobility in the region," Bayonne Mayor Mark Smith said in a statement. "It has become an obstacle to safe navigation in the port so something had to be done. The Port Authority has selected the least disruptive, least expensive and quickest to execute option."

Baroni said the PA is already working on the planning, design and engineering issues.

"The Bayonne Bridge has been a major priority of mine and I have advocated for the raising of the bridge to help save over 250,000 jobs," said Congressman Albio Sires, D-West New York. "I applaud the teamwork necessary from the Port Authority, Mayor Mark Smith and his administration, the state of New Jersey, and the entire congressional delegation."

In October, the Board agreed to provide up to \$1 billion in its capital planning process to help finance a Bayonne Bridge solution. Christie has made the Bayonne Bridge project one of his top priorities, given its critical role in allowing ship traffic to get to terminals in the Port of New York and New Jersey.

The port currently supports approximately 269,000 jobs in the New York, New Jersey region, and provides for \$11.2 billion in personal income, \$36.1 billion in business income and \$5 billion in local, state and federal tax revenues.

In 2009, the port handled 4.6 million loaded and unloaded 20-foot equivalent units (TEUs). The dollar value of all cargo handled was more than \$146 billion.

For more than 70 years, the Bayonne Bridge has been an integral part of the region's transportation network. Its innovative structure and design has been regarded as a major engineering landmark, and in 1985, the bridge was designated a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers.