



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

GOETHALS BRIDGE REPLACEMENT

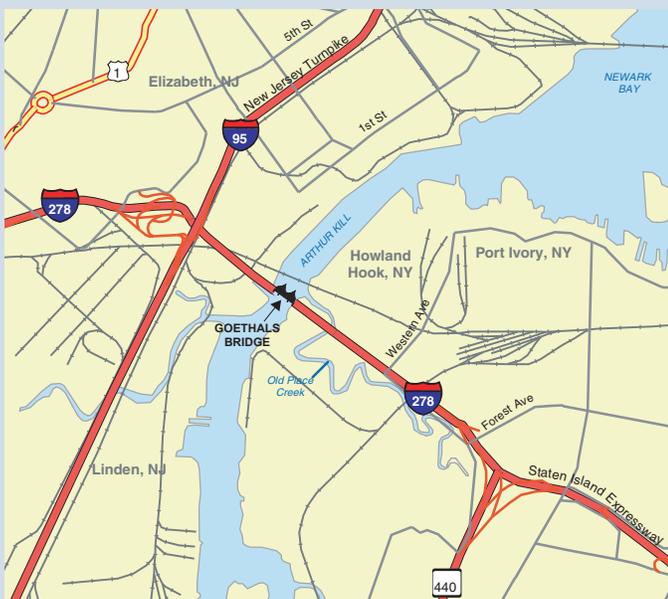
NEWSLETTER 17 FALL 2004

ABOUT THIS PROJECT:

The United States Coast Guard is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate the environmental, economic, and social impacts of the proposed Goethals Bridge replacement. The Port Authority of NY & NJ, project sponsor, has proposed this action as part of its Goethals Bridge Modernization Program.

The Goethals Bridge is a major bi-state crossing, connecting Staten Island, New York, and Elizabeth, New Jersey. The bridge carries approximately 76,000 vehicles daily (both directions) and provides direct connections to the New Jersey Turnpike and Routes 1 & 9 in New Jersey, and to the Staten Island Expressway and the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge in New York. Constructed in the 1920s, the 76-year-old bridge is outdated, having narrow lanes, lack of emergency breakdown lanes, and other structural limitations. These deficiencies contribute to deteriorating traffic and safety conditions on the bridge, as well as increasing maintenance and repair costs.

STUDY AREA:



The Coast Guard is the federal lead agency responsible for preparing the EIS since a bridge permit must be issued to authorize replacement of the bridge. The EIS will evaluate the impacts that replacing the existing Goethals Bridge would have on the surrounding communities and environment in the NY/NJ region. The EIS will also evaluate alternatives to bridge replacement that might address the needs at the Goethals Bridge and its immediate travel corridor. Through the environmental review process, the EIS will provide the information necessary to select an alternative that would best meet the bridge and corridor needs.

The EIS will be prepared in accordance with regulations of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. NEPA ensures that environmental information is available to the public before any decisions are made. Participation by the public is a critical part of the environmental review process to ensure that public concerns and issues are addressed in the EIS. This newsletter is the first in a series that will be issued during the EIS process to keep you informed about this important study.

The Coast Guard invites you to learn about the proposed action, the environmental review process, and about how you can become involved.



WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE EXISTING BRIDGE?



Photo of the existing Goethals Bridge.

The problems with the existing bridge include:

- Inadequate design features, such as narrow lanes and no emergency shoulders, which result in worsening traffic and safety conditions;
- Continuing frequent and costly maintenance and repair projects, due to the age of the bridge;
- Unreliability as a link in the region's transportation system (relative to travel time) during certain emergencies;
- Increasing traffic volumes, including truck traffic, leading to poor traffic conditions and high accident levels;
- Limitations in the bridge's layout that restrict E-ZPass access and resultant improvements in traffic flows; and
- Deficiencies in the layout that preclude future transit service or other priority lanes on the bridge.

WHAT ALTERNATIVES ARE TO BE CONSIDERED TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS?

Alternative solutions for addressing the problems include, but may not be limited to:

- The no-build alternative, which describes future conditions if the existing Goethals Bridge remains without any significant structural improvements;
- Rehabilitation of the existing bridge to significantly extend its useful life;
- A proposed replacement bridge, south of the existing bridge, and removal of the existing bridge;
- Other bridge replacement scenarios;
- Transit options to reduce traffic volumes;
- Congestion pricing options using varying tolls to reduce congestion during peak hours of travel;
- Other alternatives identified during the EIS scoping process.

WHAT IS SCOPING?

The public has a critical role in the environmental review process. The purpose of "scoping" the EIS is to provide an opportunity for members of the general public and others to comment on the purpose and need for the proposed bridge replacement, the types of alternatives to be considered, and to provide input on the issues and concerns that should be addressed in the EIS.

A Public Scoping Information Packet has been prepared for your review. You can download the Packet as well as view other information from the project Web site at www.goethalseis.com. You can also request that a copy be mailed to you by calling 917-339-0488, or e-mailing mfitzpatrick@hshassoc.com. Copies will also be available at local public libraries and community centers.

The Coast Guard will be holding two public scoping meetings to advise you of the particulars of the proposed project, and to receive your comments about the proposed replacement of the Goethals Bridge replacement, issues of concern, and the proposed environmental studies for the EIS.

You will be able to review background information and talk informally with members of the study staff at open house areas prior to and during the scoping meetings. Following a presentation about the EIS studies to be undertaken, you will be invited to formally submit your comments orally at the meetings or in writing to the Coast Guard by November 5, 2004.

We hope to see you there!

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS:

Staten Island, New York Tuesday, October 5th, 2004

Two Sessions: 2:00 - 5:00 and 5:30 - 8:30 PM
Presentations: 2:30 PM and at 6:00 PM

The Staten Island Hotel
Harbor Room and Ballroom
1415 Richmond Avenue
Staten Island, New York 10314

Elizabeth, New Jersey Wednesday, October 6th, 2004

Two Sessions: 2:00 - 5:00 and 5:30 - 8:30 PM
Presentations: 2:30 PM and at 6:00 PM

City of Elizabeth City Hall
Council Chambers - 3rd Floor
50 Winfield Scott Plaza
Elizabeth, New Jersey 07201

For information on these meetings, or if you have any special needs, please contact Howard/Stein-Hudson at 917-339-0488. Directions to the meetings will be found on the project Web site at www.goethalseis.com.

We will also be accepting comments on the Public Scoping Information Packet and on the EIS overall through November 5, 2004 at 5:00 PM. These comments can be mailed to:

Commander (obr)
First Coast Guard District
United States Coast Guard
Battery Building
One South Street
New York, NY 10004
Attn: Mr. E. Feemster

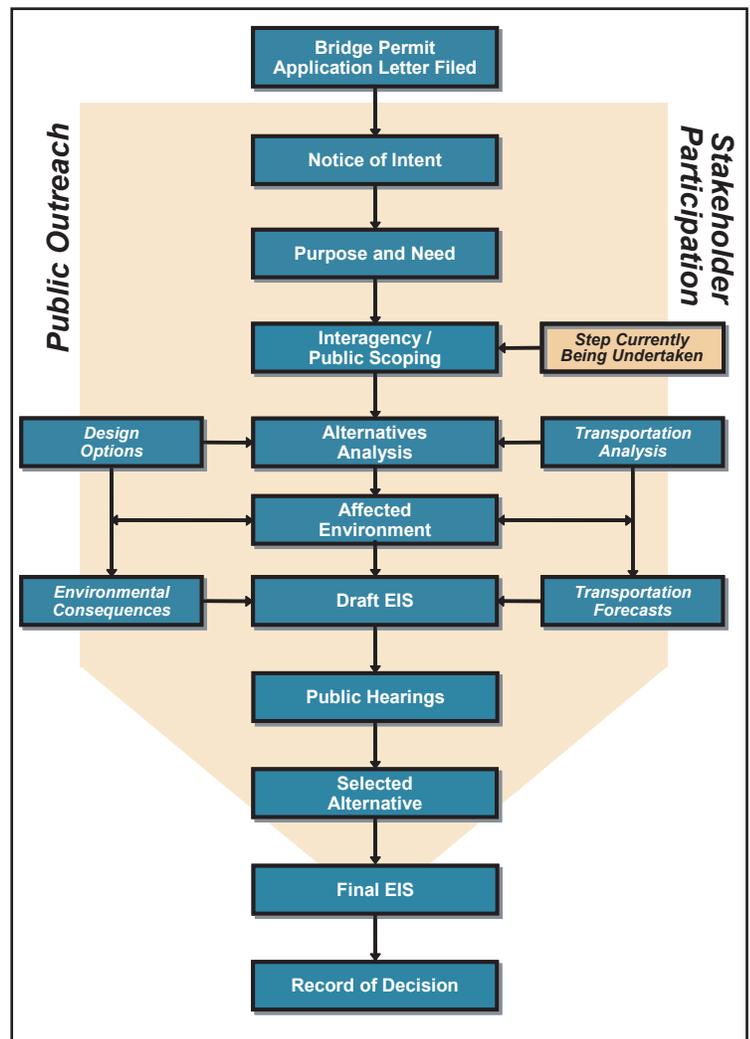
PROJECT SCHEDULE

- Public Scoping Meeting – October 5, 2004 (Staten Island, NY)
- Public Scoping Meeting – October 6, 2004 (Elizabeth, NJ)
- Close of Scoping Comment Period – November 5, 2004
- Draft EIS (Target Date) – Early 2006

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Following the scoping process, alternatives that may address the inadequacies of the existing bridge will be evaluated through a screening process to select the ones that would best meet the defined purpose and need with the least negative environmental impacts. Those alternatives will then be evaluated in detail in the EIS to fully consider all social, economic, and environmental impacts that would result from each.

In addition to information available at www.goethalseis.com, periodic newsletters and public open houses will be used to inform the public of study progress and issues, and to get your comments and input as the EIS proceeds. Major study milestones are shown below.





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HOW DO I LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PROJECT?

For up-to-date information, please visit the project Web site at www.goethalseis.com. The site also contains links for more information about the NEPA process.

WHO'S WHO IN THE STUDY?

The United States Coast Guard is the federal lead agency directing preparation of the EIS.

The Port Authority of NY & NJ is the sponsor of the proposed replacement of the Goethals Bridge.

The Public has a critical role to play by helping shape the scope of the Draft EIS, reviewing study information, and providing comments and other input to the Coast Guard throughout the environmental review process.

United States Coast Guard
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