ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

GOETHALS BRIDGE REPLACEMENT

PUBLIC SCOPING INFORMATION PACKET

United States Coast Guard

September 20, 2004

ANNOUNCEMENT OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS

The Port Authority of NY & NJ has proposed replacement of the existing Goethals Bridge. The United States Coast Guard is the Federal lead agency directing preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed bridge replacement. The EIS will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and its implementing regulations, and associated rules and regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). The EIS is also expected to satisfy the environmental review requirements of New York State, New Jersey, and New York City.

The United States Coast Guard will conduct Public Scoping Meetings in Staten Island, New York, and Elizabeth, New Jersey, to solicit public comment and input on issues related to the proposed bridge replacement that will be addressed in the EIS, and on the studies that are proposed to be conducted for the EIS. In addition to the public scoping meetings, informal open houses will be held to offer the public further opportunity to review information and to speak with study participants about the proposed project and the EIS studies. The dates and locations of the public scoping meetings and associated open houses are as follow:

Staten Island, New York:
Tuesday, October 5th, 2004
The Staten Island Hotel
Harbor Room and Ballroom
1415 Richmond Avenue
Staten Island, NY 10314
***Open House*: 2:00 – 5:00 PM and 5:30 - 8:30 PM**
Scoping Meeting Presentation about the EIS at 2:30 and 6:00 PM followed by Receipt of Public Comments

Elizabeth, New Jersey:
Wednesday, October 6th, 2004
City of Elizabeth City Hall
Council Chambers – 3rd Floor
50 Winfield Scott Plaza
Elizabeth, New Jersey 07201
***Open House*: 2:00 – 5:00 PM and 5:30 - 8:30 PM**
Scoping Meeting Presentation about the EIS at 2:30 and 6:00 PM followed by Receipt of Public Comments

Table of Contents

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The United States Coast Guard (the Coast Guard) is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed **Goethals Bridge Replacement** (the action) and other alternatives to address functional obsolescence of the existing Goethals Bridge. The Port Authority of NY & NJ (the Port Authority) has proposed the action as part of the Goethals Bridge Modernization Program (GBMP) to improve conditions of the bridge crossing.

The Goethals Bridge spans the Arthur Kill between Staten Island, New York, and Elizabeth, New Jersey, and provides direct connections between the Staten Island Expressway/West Shore Expressway on the east and the New Jersey Turnpike/NJ Routes 1/9 on the west (see Figure 1). The Goethals Bridge corridor is an important link in the regional transportation network.

The 76-year-old bridge has narrow 10-foot-wide lanes, no emergency shoulders, and other design deficiencies that result in deteriorating traffic and safety conditions and inhibit efficient clearing of accidents. Because of the bridge's age, it requires ongoing maintenance, repair and rehabilitation at continually escalating cost. At the same time, the layout of the existing bridge and approach structures limits how much traffic flows can be improved with use of E-ZPass technology (which has improved traffic at the bridge's toll plaza). The layout is also inadequate to dedicate space for any future transit service across the bridge. Finally, the existing bridge's shortcomings make it an unreliable link in the region's transportation network, should traffic need to be diverted from elsewhere.

The design of the proposed new facility would reflect current traffic design standards, modern structural and seismic codes, national-security safeguards, and technology enhancements. It would also incorporate operational flexibility, which is not feasible with the existing bridge, to facilitate future transit-service opportunities. By ensuring the ability to meet current and future interstate travel demand, the proposed action is expected to support long-term economic growth and improved mobility for the local communities, and enhance overall performance, flexibility and reliability of the transportation network serving the greater metropolitan area.

The Port Authority notified the Coast Guard by letter of June 3, 2004, of its intent to submit a formal application for a Bridge Permit under the General Bridge Act of 1946. Accordingly, the Coast Guard assumed the role of the Federal lead agency for preparation and issuance of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed project, in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969.

The EIS will evaluate the social, economic, and environmental impacts that would result with replacement of the existing bridge and with alternative actions that may also address the purpose and need for the proposed bridge replacement.

This Public Scoping Information Packet has been prepared as part of the formal scoping process for the Draft EIS (DEIS), pursuant to NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR Part 1500 et seq.). The purpose of the EIS scoping process is to provide opportunity for the public and agencies to comment on and provide input to the plan of study for the development of the DEIS.

Environmental Impact Statement
Goethals Bridge Replacement
REGIONAL LOCATION

Figure 1.

This Packet provides information describing the EIS process for the proposed Goethals Bridge Replacement, as follows:

- **Overview:** a description of the EIS process;
- **Purpose and Need for the Proposed Bridge Replacement and Project Goals;**
- **Alternatives:** types to be evaluated in the EIS;
- **Social, Economic, and Environmental Impacts;**
- **Public Participation and Interagency Coordination Program**

A more detailed Draft Scoping Document has been prepared for review by agencies that were invited to participate in an interagency scoping meeting. The Draft Scoping Document is available to the public by downloading it from the EIS Web site (www.goethalseis.com), or a copy can be requested by fax, e-mail or mail to the following:

Fax – 917-339-1068
E-mail – mfitzpatrick@hshassoc.com
Mail: Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates
517 W. 35th St, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10001

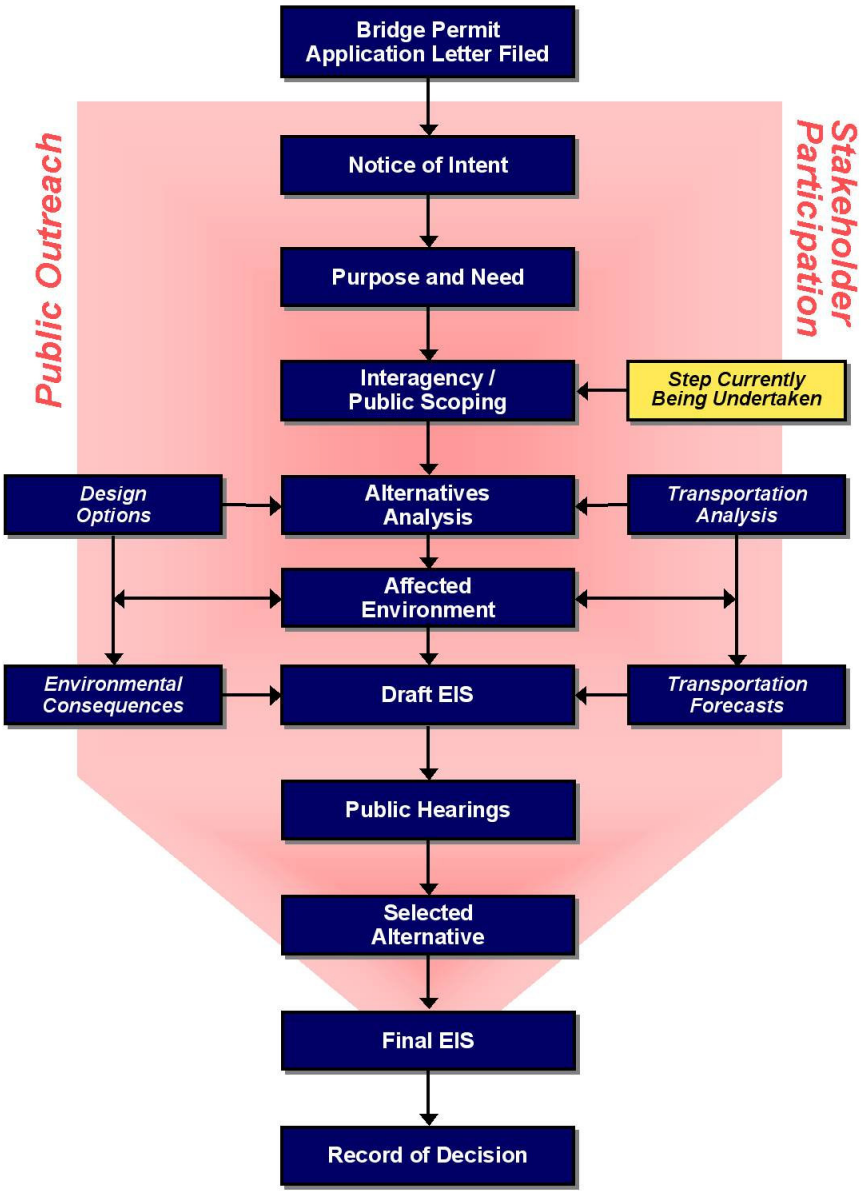
2.0 STUDY OVERVIEW

2.1 Initiating the EIS Process

Figure 2 shows the general steps in the EIS process. The process officially began with the Port Authority's submittal to the Coast Guard of a Letter of Intent to File a Bridge Permit Application for the proposed Goethals Bridge Replacement. In response to this letter, the Coast Guard assumed the role of Federal lead agency for preparation of the EIS and published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a DEIS in the *Federal Register* (August 10, 2004). This initiated the scoping process.

2.2 EIS Scoping Process

The purpose of the EIS scoping process is to provide an opportunity for the public and government agencies to comment on and provide input to help identify issues related to the proposed Goethals Bridge replacement to be addressed in the DEIS, and the studies that should be conducted for the DEIS. The Coast Guard is holding formal scoping meetings to provide information about the issues and studies for the DEIS, and to receive public and agency comments and suggestions for consideration in the DEIS. The agency scoping meeting was held on September 14, 2004, at the offices of the Coast Guard in New York City. Two public scoping meetings will be held on October 5th and 6th, 2004, in Staten Island, NY, and Elizabeth, NJ, respectively.



	Environmental Impact Statement Goethals Bridge Replacement PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS	Figure 2

Comments and input about the issues and studies for the DEIS may be made orally at the formal scoping meetings or in writing, and will be accepted through November 5, 2004. Written comments should be sent to:

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

2.3 DEIS Preparation

The DEIS will be prepared in accordance with NEPA regulations designed to identify significant environmental issues at an early stage and promote cooperative consultation among agencies before the DEIS is prepared. The DEIS will specifically follow the CEQ regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR Part 1500 et seq.).

After its publication, the DEIS will be available for public and agency review and comment for a minimum 45-day period. Public hearing(s) will be held to receive comments from the public and agencies on the document. Comments may also be provided orally at the hearing(s) or in writing during the DEIS comment period.

2.4 EIS Study Areas

Potential impacts of the proposed bridge replacement (the proposed action) and of alternative actions to the proposed bridge replacement will be evaluated within the boundaries of primary, secondary, and regional study areas.

The primary study area, in which impacts may occur directly from the proposed action or its alternatives, including the No Action alternative, is proposed to include approximately:

- one-square mile of the industrial waterfront in Elizabeth and Linden, New Jersey; and
- two-square miles of less-developed acreage in northwestern Staten Island, New York.

The secondary study area, where impacts may occur indirectly, or as a secondary consequence, from the proposed action or its alternatives is proposed to extend about one-half mile in all directions from the Goethals Bridge corridor.

Because the Goethals Bridge is an important transportation link in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area, a regional study area is also proposed. This larger study area will be the focus for analysis of potential regional traffic and air quality impacts, and potential cumulative impacts that may result from the proposed action plus other major transportation and development projects near the Goethals Bridge corridor and in the region.

3.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED BRIDGE REPLACEMENT

3.1 Overview

The purpose and need for the proposed replacement of the Goethals Bridge is to eliminate the functional and physical obsolescence of the current Goethals Bridge and address the aging structure's escalating maintenance, repair, and structural retrofit needs, and associated costs. The proposed bridge replacement would also improve traffic flows, safety conditions, and management of traffic incidents on the bridge; and would improve overall performance, reliability, flexibility, and redundancy of the transportation network serving the greater New York/New Jersey metropolitan area.

The principal factors that underlie the need for the action are:

- the existing bridge's functional and physical obsolescence due to inadequate design features, including narrow lanes, no emergency shoulders, and substandard alignment, resulting in worsening traffic service, safety conditions, and management of traffic incidents on the bridge;
- the existing bridge's age, including the bridge deck, which is past its normal service life and requires ongoing maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation costs, and the need for a seismic retrofit of the substructure and superstructure;
- the existing bridge's deficiency as a reliable transportation link within the Staten Island Bridges system (which includes the Goethals Bridge, the Outerbridge Crossing, and the Bayonne Bridge) and, more broadly, in the New York/New Jersey region in the event that traffic would need to be diverted during an emergency from another transportation facility to the Goethals Bridge;
- increasing traffic volumes, including truck traffic, across the existing Goethals Bridge, resulting in worsening traffic conditions and relatively higher accident levels on the facility; and
- the layout of the existing bridge and its approaches, which limits the ability to maximize traffic flow improvements from E-ZPass technology, and which is inadequate to provide dedicated space for potential future transit service across the bridge.

The project is intended to address each of these critical factors and thereby provide for an adequate, efficient, and safe crossing in the Goethals Bridge corridor to meet present and anticipated future transportation system needs.

3.2 Background

3.2.1 Traffic Growth Trends

The importance of the Goethals Bridge within the regional roadway network grew with the opening in 1964 of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge. The two bridges, connected by the Staten Island Expressway (part of I-278), became elements of an increasingly busy travel corridor between and including New Jersey, Staten Island, and geographic Long Island (i.e., Brooklyn, Queens, and Nassau and Suffolk counties). In the larger regional transportation context, I-278 serves as a critical spine within New York City's expressway system, linking the City to northern and central New Jersey via the Goethals Bridge, and to Long Island, upstate New York, and New England via the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge and, for northern destinations, via subsequent connection to I-95.

The opening of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge and the resultant population growth on Staten Island had a substantial impact on traffic patterns and volumes across Staten Island. Traffic across the Goethals Bridge increased an average of 33 percent annually between 1964 and 1973. Traffic during the weekday peak periods of travel (6:00 to 10:00 AM and 3:00 to 7:00 PM) grew at an even steeper rate throughout these years. Compared to peak-period traffic volumes in 1964 of approximately 7,100 vehicles (in both east-

and westbound directions), the bridge currently carries approximately 18,000 to 20,000 vehicles (in both directions). This totals approximately 76,000 vehicles (in both directions) daily across the bridge.

The ratio of truck traffic to overall traffic also increased as the Goethals Bridge became a critical component in the regional network of expressways. In 1953, trucks represented less than two percent of all traffic across the bridge. In contrast, a traffic survey conducted by the Port Authority in 2003 showed that trucks made up nine percent of all trips across the bridge that year.

In addition, recent national trends toward increased motor-vehicle heights, widths, and lengths have limited truck movements through the Lincoln and Holland Tunnels (Port Authority, *Interstate Goods Movement Study*, 1992). As a result, the Port Authority's interstate bridges, including the Goethals Bridge, have become more important as routes for movement of goods in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan region.

As traffic volumes have grown, travel conditions have become increasingly congested and traffic flows on the Goethals Bridge have begun to operate below acceptable service levels during peak travel periods.

3.2.2 Previous Studies

In response to these trends, the Port Authority initiated its Staten Island Bridges Program (SIBP) in 1989 to investigate potential improvement concepts for the Staten Island Bridges system. In 1992, an environmental review of alternative improvement concepts that appeared to best address identified needs was completed. In accordance with NEPA, a comprehensive environmental analysis for modification of the bridge was undertaken by the Coast Guard, resulting in the completion of the DEIS for the SIBP in 1995; the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) was completed in 1997.

The DEIS identified two primary alternative Goethals Bridge improvement concepts: 1) a parallel bridge to the north of the existing Goethals Bridge; and 2) a parallel bridge to its south. Both of the parallel-bridge options were proposed to operate in conjunction with the existing bridge. In addition, an enhancement that was considered for both alternatives was provision of one concurrent high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) lane on the new bridge, as well as one on the existing bridge.

The environmental analyses concluded that the preferred alternative for addressing the purpose and need for the project was the construction of a new bridge, parallel and to the south of the Goethals Bridge, to operate in conjunction with the existing bridge. A Record of Decision (ROD) for that project was not issued, due to various unresolved issues.

3.3 Project Goals

Project goals, which are based on the purpose and need for the proposed Goethals Bridge replacement, have been defined as follows:

- Address the physical and functional obsolescence of the existing Goethals Bridge.
- Address structural integrity issues associated with the aging bridge.
- Reduce roadway congestion and delays and enhance mobility on the Goethals Bridge.
- Improve the flow of goods to and from Staten Island and New Jersey and in the New York/New Jersey region.
- Address future alternatives to single-occupant-vehicle commuting, including rail transit and improved road conditions for buses.
- Restore and enhance pedestrian access and provide for bicycle access.
- Implement measures to improve the bridge's structural security.
- Minimize environmental consequences of the improvement.

4.0 ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives that will be evaluated in detail in the DEIS will be selected through a screening evaluation of potentially reasonable and feasible alternatives. A preliminary list of alternatives and the criteria for evaluating them will be defined in relation to the purpose and need of the project. Comments and suggestions received during the scoping process will be considered in the formulation of the list of preliminary alternatives and the screening criteria. Public meetings will be held during the EIS process to present and discuss the alternatives screening process and its results and conclusions.

Preliminary alternatives will be identified through:

- review of previous studies prepared of the Goethals Bridge, the Staten Island Bridges system (i.e., Goethals Bridge, Outerbridge Crossing, Bayonne Bridge), and other transportation facilities (e.g., Staten Island Expressway, North Shore Railroad) in the study area;
- review of the alternatives analysis conducted for the Staten Island Bridges Program Modernization and Capacity Enhancement Program EIS (1997);
- analysis of the study area's existing transportation infrastructure and technology to identify significant system gaps or deficiencies; and
- public and agency comments received during the EIS scoping process.

The preliminary alternatives will represent a range of potential solutions that may address the purpose and need and satisfy the project goals, as described below:

No-Action Alternative: The No-Action alternative defines future conditions, inclusive of major rehabilitation of the existing Goethals Bridge to extend its service life, and transportation projects and improvements that are programmed and committed, but not including replacement of the Goethals Bridge.

Bridge Replacement: The Port Authority's preferred proposal is to replace the existing Goethals Bridge. Incorporated into the design of the proposed new facility will be elements to reflect current traffic design standards, modern structural and seismic codes, national-security safeguards and technology enhancement, and operational flexibility to facilitate future transit service opportunities. Replacement bridge options may include a single span south of the existing Goethals Bridge, or dual spans, one south of the existing structure, the other within the existing bridge footprint, with subsequent demolition and removal of the existing bridge.

Goethals Bridge Rehabilitation for Significant Life-Span Extension: While the Goethals Bridge is currently undergoing a $60 million major structural rehabilitation program to extend the span's service life for an additional 7 to 10 years, significant additional, ongoing rehabilitation (including seismic retrofitting) would be required to extend the existing facility's service life for as long as would be expected with a replacement bridge.

Other Structural Alternatives: Other structural alternatives may include, but not be limited to: a replacement bridge north of the existing Goethals Bridge; a bridge parallel to the existing bridge either north or south of the existing Goethals Bridge; dual replacement bridges, one either north or south of the existing bridge and one in the existing bridge's right-of-way, following demolition and removal of the existing structure; a tunnel crossing to replace the existing bridge; fixed-guideway transit (light rail transit, commuter rail), roadway-based transit (bus rapid transit, high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) facility for ridesharing, car/van pools), and/or ferry services.

Non-Structural Alternatives: Non-structural alternatives may include new and/or modified toll pricing strategies at the Goethals Bridge and/or other transportation facilities in the study area to reduce congestion at the bridge during peak periods of travel; other Travel Demand Management (TDM)

programs designed to reduce recurrent peak-period traffic congestion; Transportation System Management (TSM) programs designed to maximize use of existing transportation facilities to improve efficiency of traffic operations; and transit options that do not require new infrastructure (for example, expanded local and/or express bus services and routes).

The identified preliminary alternatives will be screened against criteria to assess their fundamental feasibility and likely ability to satisfy the project purpose and need. Preliminary alternatives that are clearly infeasible or unreasonable, or do not have the potential to minimally satisfy most of the project goals, will be eliminated from further study.

The remaining alternatives, some of which may be combined to determine if two or more options together would more fully address the project purpose and need, will go through a second screening, using criteria to assess:

- effects on traffic service in the Goethals Bridge corridor, including considerations of capacity, congestion, reliability, and safety;
- effect on improving reliability of the bridge during emergency in another part of the Staten Island Bridges system or regional transportation system;
- effects on improving goods movement through the Goethals Bridge corridor and in the region;
- relevance to dealing with issues related to the existing bridge's age and escalating maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation needs and costs;
- local and regional environmental concerns; and
- practical construction and cost considerations.

Through the screening process, alternatives that would satisfy the project purpose and need will be advanced for detailed evaluation in the DEIS. The No-Action alternative will also be included in the detailed DEIS evaluations, serving to define the future baseline condition against which potential impacts of the "build" alternatives will be compared.

5.0 SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Future conditions with the No-Action alternative and potential impacts with the proposed action and its alternatives will be assessed for the following social, economic, and environmental categories:

- Traffic and transportation
- Air quality
- Noise and vibration
- Waterway navigation
- Energy
- Topography, geology, and soils
- Flooding, floodplains, and hydrology
- Water resources
- Biological resources
- Land use, zoning, and recommended development initiatives
- Residential or business displacement
- Socioeconomics
- Parkland and public recreation areas
- Human health
- Cultural resources
- Visual resources/aesthetics
- Solid waste management

- Infrastructure
- Contaminated materials
- Environmental justice
- Construction impacts
- Indirect and cumulative impacts

6.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND INTERAGENCY COORDINATION PROGRAM

Throughout the EIS process, the Coast Guard will conduct a program of public participation and interagency coordination. The goal of the program is to engage a diverse group of public and agency participants in order to solicit relevant input and provide timely information throughout the EIS process.

The principal formal activities are:

- EIS scoping, including agency and public scoping meetings, at the beginning of the EIS process to provide information about the proposed project and the EIS process, and elicit agency and public input and comment; and
- EIS public hearings, to present the results of the evaluations documented in the DEIS, and elicit agency and public comments for consideration in selection of a preferred alternative and completion of the Final EIS (FEIS).

Opportunities for public participation will be available and study information will be provided through:

- the EIS web site (www.goethalseis.com);
- periodic newsletters will be mailed to the EIS mailing list (sign up for the mailing list on the web site) and made available at convenient public repositories (e.g., libraries, community centers);
- periodic press releases;
- public open houses, which will be announced on the web site and through notification to the EIS mailing list and at public repositories; and
- a Stakeholder Committee, to be comprised of a cross-section of key stakeholders, organizations, and interests, which will meet periodically to provide an open forum for discussion about the proposed project and EIS process, as it progresses.

Interagency coordination will be conducted through:

- a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), comprised of federal, state, local, and Metropolitan Planning Organization (New York Metropolitan Transportation Council and North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority) agencies to provide guidance on traffic/transportation and mobile-source air quality and noise issues throughout the EIS process; and
- an Environmental Task Force (ETF) comprised of federal, state, and local agencies with jurisdiction and expertise in all other environmental categories not included in the TAC to provide guidance on environmental issues throughout the EIS process.