



# ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

## GOETHALS BRIDGE REPLACEMENT

NEWSLETTER 6 / WINTER 2008-2009

### INTRODUCTION

The United States Coast Guard (USCG) is the lead federal agency for the preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed Goethals Bridge Replacement (GBR), which includes conducting detailed evaluations of the environmental, economic, and social impacts of four Build Alternatives that have been developed. The Port Authority of NY & NJ (PANYNJ), the project sponsor, has proposed this action as part of its Goethals Bridge Modernization Program. This is the sixth in a series of newsletters to inform stakeholders and the public about this study as it progresses.

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### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For project information, visit the GBR EIS Web site at [www.goethalseis.com](http://www.goethalseis.com). The site contains links to meeting presentations, as well as to previous newsletters and other study materials.



United States Coast Guard

### PRELIMINARY DEIS FINDINGS

#### REFINED PROJECT ALTERNATIVES FOR DEIS ANALYSIS

Based on the screening process conducted to identify project alternatives for evaluation in the DEIS, on input received during public outreach meetings, and on design studies conducted to address height limitations set for any bridge replacement due to the Goethals Bridge's proximity to Newark Liberty International Airport, four refined bridge-replacement alternatives have been studied for the DEIS:

- *New Alignment South* - a single-bridge replacement in an alignment directly south of the existing Goethals Bridge (previously 6-Lane Replacement Bridge – South);
- *New Alignment North* - a single-bridge replacement in an alignment directly north of the existing Goethals Bridge (previously 6-Lane Replacement Bridge – North);
- *Existing Alignment South* - a single-bridge replacement in an alignment within and extending south of the existing Goethals Bridge alignment (previously Twin Replacement Bridges – South) and;
- *Existing Alignment North* - a single-bridge replacement in an alignment within and extending north of the existing Goethals Bridge alignment (previously Twin Replacement Bridges – North).

#### Each refined alternative:

- shares a single design concept: one cable-stayed bridge with two roadway decks that are separated by two towers and sufficient space to accommodate a potential future transit service;
- each of the two roadway decks contain three 12-ft.-wide lanes, one 12-ft.-wide outer shoulder, one 5-ft.-wide inner shoulder, and one 10-ft.-wide bikeway/sidewalk (on the northern deck only);

- allows for under-bridge navigational clearance at a minimum of 135 feet above mean high water (MHW) which is unchanged from the existing bridge; and
- includes a permanent access road located generally below the proposed replacement bridge and approach spans for construction, maintenance and security purposes.

The main spans of both "New" Alignment alternatives are proposed to be constructed in their entirety, and then placed into operation before demolition of the existing Goethals Bridge. The main spans of both "Existing" Alignment alternatives are proposed to be constructed in stages using a "half-width" construction approach, in which the existing Goethals Bridge would be demolished after construction of the first half and before construction of the second half of the new bridge.

#### PRELIMINARY IMPACTS & POTENTIAL MITIGATION MEASURES

The DEIS will describe the following potential project-related impacts in detail:

- Land Use, Zoning, Socioeconomics & Environmental Justice
- Community Facilities & Parklands / Recreational Facilities
- Historic & Archaeological Resources
- Visual Quality & Shadow Impacts
- Topography, Geology & Soils
- Water Resources & Floodplains
- Biotic Communities
- Coastal Zone Management
- Navigation & Airspace
- Solid Waste, Infrastructure & Contaminated Materials
- Traffic & Transportation
- Air Quality & Human Health Air Quality
- Energy
- Noise

Following are highlights of a few of the areas of preliminary impact findings, and measures being considered to mitigate the impacts. This newsletter reports on potential impacts to communities and human activities. **More information on the potential impacts and mitigation measures for these and the other environmental issues evaluated and reported in the DEIS can be found on the project Web site at [www.goethalseis.com](http://www.goethalseis.com) in the PowerPoint presentation that was shown and discussed at the October 2008 public open houses held in Elizabeth, NJ, and Staten Island, NY.**

### ***Socioeconomic Impacts***

Based on field surveys and tax map and Census data, potential impacts to businesses and residences were identified. The potential impacts on businesses range from three to eight displacements. Potential impacts on residents from the four alternatives range from no impacts to 130 displacements.

In addition, the following socioeconomic benefits would result with the proposed bridge replacement:

- Approximately 400 - 500 construction jobs would be generated on an annual basis during a 56 -70 month construction period, depending on the alternative; and
- Approximately 5,500 - 5,900 total jobs would be generated in other sectors during the construction period, depending on the alternative.

### ***Traffic & Transportation***

Detailed studies conducted for the DEIS show that future traffic conditions on certain roadways and bridges within the Goethals Bridge corridor would be congested to varying degrees whether the proposed bridge replacement is built or not. The studies also show that the Proposed Project would cause worsening traffic operations and congestion on the Staten Island Expressway and on local and/or service roads near the Howland Hook Marine Terminal and the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge in New York; and in the Bayway Circle/Bayway Avenue Corridor and in the New Jersey Turnpike Interchange 13 complex in New Jersey. Given these results, a draft traffic mitigation plan has been developed to improve traffic conditions with the Proposed Project to the same or better conditions as would occur without the project.

The draft traffic mitigation plan includes:

- One managed use lane for buses and high-occupancy vehicles (HOV) in each direction on the GBR, which would be in operation during peak commuting hours; and
- Transportation System Management (TSM) measures to improve traffic flows on local and service roads near the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, the GBR and the Howland Hook Marine Terminal, as well as in the Bayway Circle/Bayway Avenue corridor. TSM measures would include signal-timing changes, signalization of intersections, re-striping of pavement, and removal of on-street parking at specific locations.

### ***Air Quality***

Detailed analyses were conducted of future air quality conditions at four sites in New York and New Jersey where project-related traffic increases, compared to future traffic without the GBR, to evaluate the potential for local air quality impacts. Air quality analyses were also conducted to determine whether the GBR would cause or worsen regional air quality problems. The air quality studies addressed both the construction and operational phases of the project. The detailed studies show that the GBR will not adversely affect air quality in the Goethals Bridge corridor or in the New York/New Jersey region.

### ***Noise***

Noise-sensitive sites, including residences and a school, are located near the Goethals Bridge. Based on the detailed noise studies conducted at those sites, it was concluded that most noise-sensitive locations are beyond the direct limits of the GBR project and are primarily affected by noise sources other than bridge-related traffic. In addition, noise-level increases with the GBR would not be perceptible regardless of project alignment.

## PUBLIC OUTREACH

Information about the potential project impacts and preliminary mitigation measures that are documented in the DEIS was presented and discussed at a series of meetings hosted by the USCG:

*October 14th, 2008* - the study's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met at the USCG's offices in lower Manhattan. The TAC includes transportation and environmental resource agencies with expertise in traffic/transportation and related air quality and noise issues and areas of potential concern related to the Proposed Project. Thirty-four TAC members attended the meeting from 20 different agencies.

*October 14th, 2008* - the study's Environmental Task Force (ETF) met at the USCG's offices. The ETF includes regulatory and resource agencies that focus on issues related to wetlands and other natural resources, historic and archeologically sensitive sites, and other issues and potential concerns not addressed by the TAC. Fourteen people attended the meeting, representing 11 different agencies.

*October 15th, 2008* - the study's Stakeholder Committee (SC) met at the Elizabeth Public Library. The SC includes representatives of key stakeholder organizations potentially affected by the Proposed Project and provides a forum for discussion and interaction concerning EIS-related issues. Twenty-four people attended, representing 20 different organizations.

*October 21st & 23rd, 2008* - public open houses were held at the Elizabeth Public Library in Elizabeth, NJ, and the Staten Island Hotel in Staten Island, NY. These open houses provided a forum for discussion of the results of the environmental analyses among the people who attended and the EIS study team. The open house in Elizabeth drew 50 attendees; 46 persons attended the Staten Island open house.

*During the October 2008 outreach meetings, several questions that may be of interest to our readers were asked. Here are the USCG's responses to those questions:*

***Why isn't the DEIS addressing mass transit on the new bridge?***

Mass transit was considered as a possible project alternative during the early screening phase of alternatives evaluation, but the analyses demonstrated that there would not be enough riders to warrant a dedicated Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lane or Light Rail Transit (LRT) on a 6-lane replacement bridge, and that dedicating a lane strictly to buses would result in unacceptable traffic volumes in the remaining lanes on the GBR. However, conceptual designs for the bridge-replacement alternatives presented in the DEIS do not preclude the ability to accommodate some form of mass transit in the future, were future studies to show that it would be warranted. However, the bridge would not be able to support heavy commuter rail.

***Would a second EIS be required to evaluate the transit service?***

Yes, another EIS would likely be required to evaluate the potential impacts that would result with building and operating a mass transit system over the GBR and to wherever it would connect in Elizabeth and on Staten Island.

***Why isn't the project considering freight?***

The study initially considered several freight-movement alternatives but concluded that, while they may be appropriate to consider in some other study, none of them would address the specific purpose and need for the proposed replacement of the Goethals Bridge. However, truck traffic has been analyzed in the GBR EIS in the traffic impact analyses. Recent reactivation of rail freight services along the Staten Island Railroad and the Arthur Kill Lift Bridge is helping alleviate truck traffic in the area.

***Why not convert the existing bridge to a high-line type facility, or use it as a one-way traffic, truck-only, or rail corridor?***

Among the reasons that the Goethals Bridge has been proposed to be replaced is that the existing bridge is 80 years old and well past its designed life span. The DEIS studies estimate that it would cost \$800+ million to maintain the bridge in safe and reliable condition for another 100 years (which is the design life for the replacement bridge). This would be an additional cost to that of building the proposed bridge replacement.

***Why is the bicycle and pedestrian lane only included on one side of the GBR?***

One lane on the GBR is anticipated to be sufficient for satisfying the demand for bicyclists and pedestrians in this

corridor, and would be an improvement over the existing lack of a bicycle/pedestrian lane on the existing bridge, which has been closed for security reasons in recent years.

***When would the preferred alternative be selected?***

The PANYNJ will identify which of the four alignments it prefers after the DEIS is issued and public and agency review comments are received by the USCG. The PANYNJ's preferred alignment will be identified in the Final EIS (FEIS), which is anticipated for release in late 2009. In addition to the PANYNJ's decision, the USCG will identify its environmentally preferred alternative in the Record of Decision, which will conclude the project's federal environmental review process.

***What factors are being considered to determine the preferred alternative?***

The preferred alternative will be selected based on the results of the environmental impact analyses and on public and agency comments received on the DEIS, as well as engineering, constructability and cost considerations.

***What are the cost comparisons among the four alignment alternatives?***

Current estimates for replacement-bridge construction, without including additional costs for property acquisition or impact mitigation, are approximately \$750 million for the two new-alignment alternatives and \$800 million for the two existing-alignment alternatives.

***Will a construction impact analysis be conducted?***

A detailed, quantitative analysis of potential construction impacts of the PANYNJ's preferred alternative will be conducted for and documented in the FEIS.

***When will the missing links between I-278 and Routes 1/9 be completed?***

The missing links between I-278 westbound and Route 1/9 northbound, as well as between Route 1/9 southbound and I-278 eastbound, are not part of the proposed GBR project. This separate project will be considered by the New Jersey Department of Transportation, the operator of both roadways, in coordination with the PANYNJ and the Federal Highway Administration. The PANYNJ is committed to the implementation of this project. The missing link project will require its own federal environmental review process, as it will involve access modifications to the interstate highway system.

***What is the schedule for the Proposed Project?***

On-site construction is currently projected to begin in 2011.

***Is funding available for the Proposed Project?***

Funding would be provided by the PANYNJ.

## PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

### THE PROPOSED REPLACEMENT FOR THE GOETHALS BRIDGE WILL:

- Address the bridge's existing design deficiencies that make the bridge functionally and physically obsolete;
- Provide safer operating conditions and reduce accidents on the bridge;
- Improve traffic service on the bridge and its approaches;
- Enhance structural integrity and reduce life-cycle costs with the aging bridge;
- Provide transportation system redundancy in the region;
- Enhance safe and reliable truck access for regional goods movement; and
- Provide additional width on the replacement structure to accommodate potential future transit service.

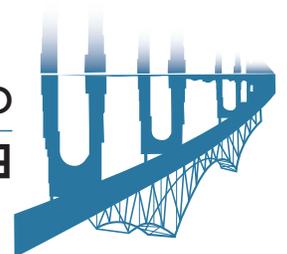
## WHAT'S NEXT?

The USCG anticipates publishing the DEIS in Winter 2008-2009. Once the DEIS is available, public hearings will be conducted. Stakeholders and members of the public will be invited to review the DEIS and submit comments to the USCG during a designated period of time. All comments received by the USCG will be considered prior to identifying a preferred project alignment, and responses to comments and questions on the DEIS will be provided in the FEIS.



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