



Environmental Planning Phase: Frequently Asked Questions

Fall 2023



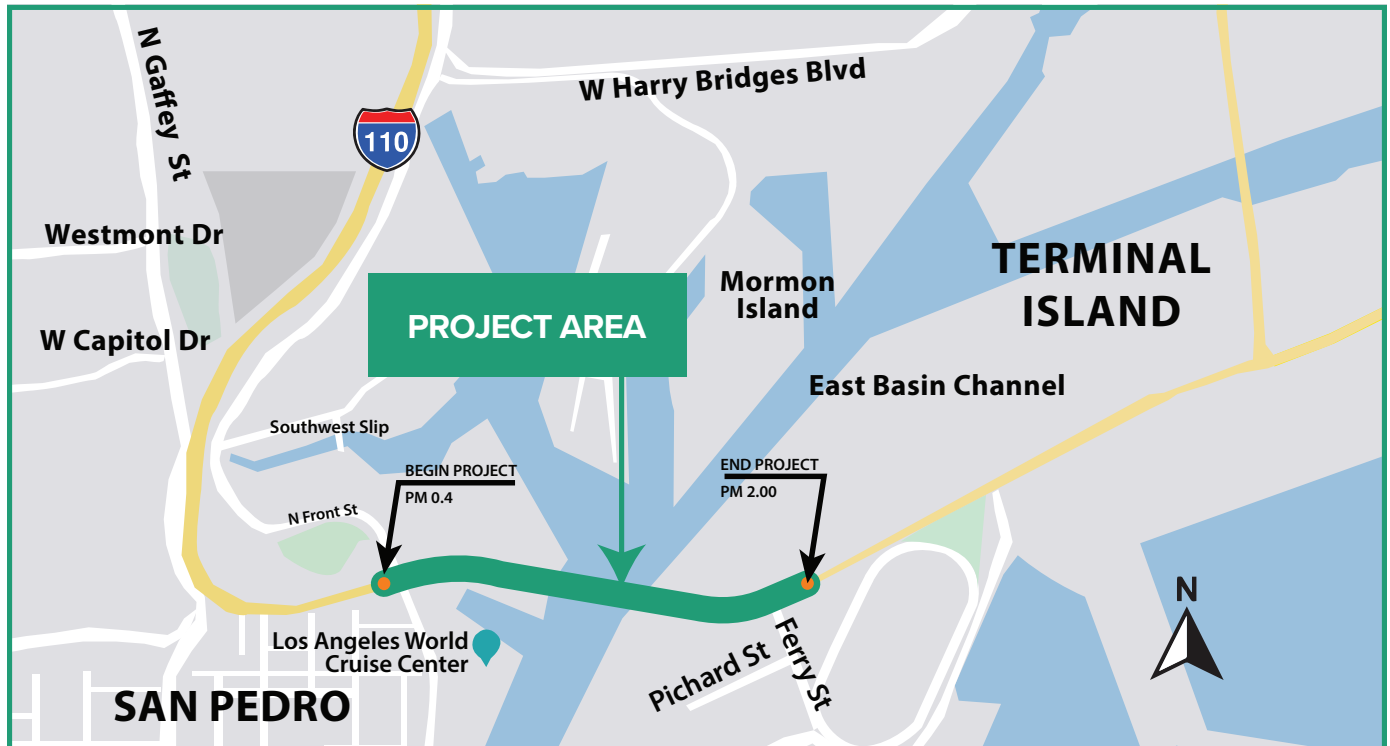
PROJECT

1 What is the Vincent Thomas Bridge Deck Replacement Project?

The Vincent Thomas Bridge (VTB) was built in 1963 and has been in service for 60 years. Although the bridge is structurally sound, the bridge deck is rapidly deteriorating due to concrete fatigue, primarily caused by vehicular and heavy truck traffic.

Caltrans is proposing to replace the entire bridge deck and its seismic sensors. In addition, the project will replace the bridge railings, fences and median barrier. The purpose of this project is to preserve the operations, functionality, and structural integrity of the bridge deck.

2 Where is the project located?



The project is on the SR 47 from post miles 0.4 to 2.0. The bridge provides a critical connection from the community of San Pedro to Terminal Island, the ports and the City of Long Beach.

More Information

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3 Why do we need this project?

The concrete barrier and guardrails are not in compliance with the latest requirements for the federal Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware. If the current bridge deck of the VTB were to remain in place as is, and the entire bridge deck deterioration is not addressed, the structural integrity of the deck will continually worsen and have more localized deck failures, which will require more frequent emergency bridge closures for repairs. There will come a time when the bridge is closed more often than it is open for traffic. The bridge deck has reached the end of its design life, and the deck replacement is the best available option. The project is needed to enhance the safety of the traveling public on the VTB and maintain an important economic corridor to Terminal Island.

4 What is the Build Alternative?

The Build Alternative proposes to replace the bridge deck of the VTB, the median concrete barrier, fences, guardrails and seismic sensors. The proposed improvements would ensure the safety of the traveling public on the VTB and provide a viable bridge deck that is designed to last many decades depending on the types of materials used and environmental factors.

The following preliminary construction staging options are being considered:

- **Single-stage construction:** full closure may last 9 to 12 months with detours and 24/7 work.
- **Two-stage construction:** partial closure with three lanes closed and one lane open in one direction for each construction stage. The work would require multiple weekend (55-hour) full closures and overnight full closures of the bridge. Construction would last 18-24 months with weekend closures or 24-30 months with no weekend closures.
- **Three-stage construction:** partial closure with one lane open in each direction for all construction stages. The work would require multiple weekend (55-hour) full closures and overnight full closures of the bridge. Construction would last 24-30 months with weekend closures or 30- 36 months with no weekend closures.

During construction, the anticipated detour routes will direct traffic to and from Terminal Island via the Commodore Schuyler F. Heim Bridge (SR 47) from the north and the Gerald Desmond Bridge (I-710) from the east. These detour routes potentially include Sepulveda Boulevard, West Harry Bridges Boulevard, Alameda Street, Pacific Coast Highway (SR 1), Henry Ford Avenue (SR 47), and Terminal Island Freeway (SR 103). Official detour routes will be selected during the project’s approval phase.

5 Who is leading the project?

Caltrans is leading the project and is the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) lead agency preparing the Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment to comply with CEQA/NEPA.

6 When will this project be complete?

The project is anticipated to start construction in the fall of 2025 and the bridge reopened to traffic in spring of 2027. The project delivery milestones and schedule are depicted below.



*PA/ED: Project Approval and Environmental Document



7 How is the project funded?

Currently, the project is funded by the State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP). The project will be subject to a full reimbursement from the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) if the scheduled construction start and the project delivery completion deadlines are met and the bridge is open to the traveling public by March 2027. Caltrans will continue to work collaboratively with project stakeholders so the region will not lose the funding for this critical project. If the deadlines are not met, the state and the region will lose more than \$700 million in IIJA federal funding.

ENVIRONMENTAL

1 What is CEQA/NEPA?

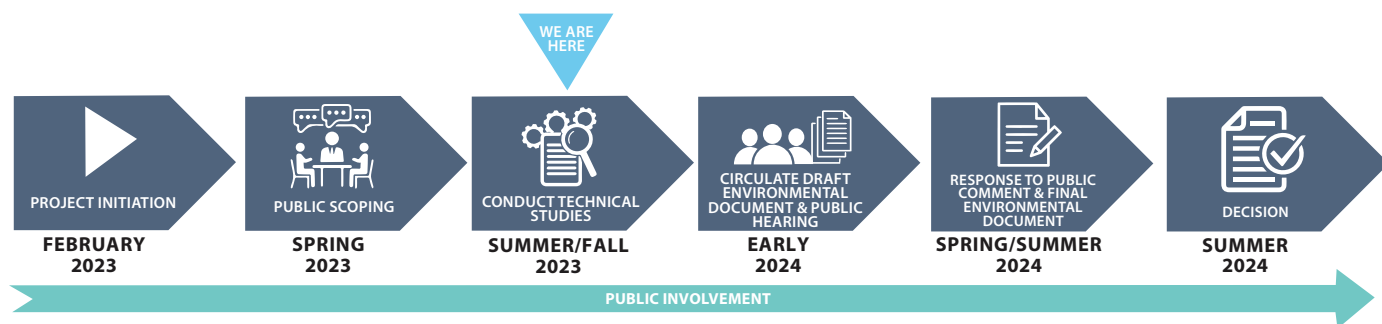
The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was signed into law in 1970 and established national environmental policy and goals for the protection, maintenance, and enhancement of the environment. NEPA provides a decision-making process for federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of projects that involve federal funding, work performed by the federal government, or permits issued by a federal agency. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) was also signed into law in 1970. CEQA requires state and local agencies to analyze and disclose the environmental impacts of proposed projects and to adopt all possible measures to avoid or mitigate those impacts.

2 What level of environmental document is being prepared for this project?

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR), the highest-level document under CEQA, is being prepared to address potential impacts due to a partial or full bridge closure. An Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared to comply with NEPA.

3 What is and where are we in the environmental process?

The project is in the initial stage of the environmental process — with the formal scoping process completed in spring/summer 2023 — and technical studies are underway. Please see the environmental process flow chart below for process steps and anticipated schedule.



4 Is additional right-of-way needed for this project?

No property acquisition or relocations are required for this project. Temporary easements near the project may be needed during construction for staging equipment and access.

5 How can I provide feedback or comment on this project?

Members of the public and stakeholders are encouraged to provide feedback through:

- Project feedback link: virtualeventroom.com/caltrans/vtb/
- Email: caltransvtb@virtualeventroom.net
- Public or virtual engagement activities

The public will have an opportunity to provide comments on the Draft EIR/EA during circulation of the document and at public hearings anticipated in early 2024.

6 What is a Community Advisory Committee?

To better engage with the community, understand their concerns and collaborate to minimize project related impacts, Caltrans has formed the Community Advisory Committee for the VTB project. The advisory committee includes representatives from multiple neighborhood councils, local chambers of commerce, councils of government, school district, and multiple unions, business-related organizations and other community-based entities. In addition, the committee meetings are attended by elected officials or their representatives. For transparency, the monthly Community Advisory Committee meetings are recorded and posted for public review on the project website. Additionally, members from the Community Advisory Committee attend the Technical Advisory Committee meetings to further promote collaboration and transparency between the committees.

7 What is a Technical Advisory Committee?

To engage with subject matter and technical experts in obtaining multi-jurisdictional expertise to address key concerns, discuss timing of adjacent or concurrent projects, develop collaborative strategies to ensure safety, to minimize project related impacts, and address concerns from the Community Advisory Committee, Caltrans has formed the Technical Advisory Committee for the VTB project. The task of the Technical Advisory Committee is to provide technical expertise, solutions and strategies to the Caltrans Design Team. The advisory committee includes representatives from multiple agencies of various levels of government likely to be affected by the project such as cities, the county, public works agencies, councils of government, law enforcement, and the ports. In addition, the committee meetings are attended by elected officials or their representatives. For transparency, the monthly Technical Advisory Committee meetings are recorded and posted for public review on the project website.

Additionally, members from the Technical Advisory Committee attend the Community Advisory Committee meetings to further promote collaboration and transparency between the committees.

ALTERNATIVES

1 Why can't you build a new bridge like the Gerald Desmond Bridge?

The VTB is structurally sound, but the bridge deck is deteriorating rapidly and needs to be replaced. The VTB meets current and projected traffic volumes and accommodates the ships that use the harbor, so the need for a new bridge has not been determined at this time. One of the reasons the Gerald Desmond Bridge was replaced was because it was not tall enough to accommodate the traffic of modern mega ships.



2 Can you add a bike path on the bridge?

No, the purpose of the project is to replace the deteriorating bridge deck. The design and structure will stay the same, and capacity on the bridge will not be increased. The deck area can only accommodate two travel lanes in each direction with no room left for any bike/pedestrian lanes.

TRAFFIC/DETOUR ROUTES

1 How will you be coordinating with the City of Los Angeles when construction is happening on the Alameda Street Corridor project?

Caltrans is aware there could be projects in construction during the timeframe of the VTB project (fall 2025 to spring 2027) on some of the proposed detour routes. Caltrans is coordinating closely with the City of Los Angeles and the ports and will continue to find a solution that would reduce impacts and work best for all.

2 What type of traffic analysis are you doing to understand detour routes and truck traffic in and around the ports?

Caltrans is preparing a traffic operations analysis report (TOAR) to understand potential changes to traffic patterns and traffic volumes due to diversion of traffic onto potential detour routes during a partial or full bridge closure. The report will include analysis of morning, mid-day and evening peak hour traffic volumes. Air quality and noise study reports are also in progress to evaluate potential temporary impacts to the community associated with traffic detours.

3 Are you considering other detour routes?

All detour routes are conceptual at this point and require further study. Caltrans is in the process of conducting a traffic analysis study. The study will take into account many factors, such as the upcoming Alameda Street Corridor project and other infrastructure projects in the area. The results of the traffic study will be disclosed during the circulation of the Draft EIR/EA.

4 How will you address traffic congestion during construction?

Caltrans will provide advance signage, including changeable message signs, to divert traffic away from the bridge and other impacted areas. Caltrans will also work internally with the interdisciplinary project development team, stakeholders and the project's advisory committees to address potential traffic-related impacts and implement solutions to minimize congestion.

5 Will there be increased law enforcement along proposed detour routes?

Caltrans is closely coordinating with state and local law enforcement agencies.

CONSTRUCTION

1 When will construction begin?

Construction is anticipated to start in the fall of 2025.



2 How will you notify the public of construction and detour routes?

Multiple channels will be utilized to notify the public, such as, but not limited to, press releases, social media, mailers sent to residents and businesses, newspaper and radio advertisements, ample signage, and changeable message signs. Caltrans will closely coordinate with the advisory committees to collaborate on engagement to notify the community and stakeholders. Notification to the public will continue prior to and during construction.

3 Which construction staging option is anticipated to have the least expensive construction contract?

A single-stage, full closure for 9-12 months would be the fastest and most cost-effective construction staging option.

4 Are the construction timeframes accurate for each of the proposed construction staging options?

The estimated construction durations are estimates and are subject to change as the project's design progresses. In addition to the means and methods of construction, other factors such as materials and equipment availability, will determine actual construction duration.

AVOIDANCE AND MINIMIZATION

1 What process do you have for potential loss of revenue for the local businesses during construction?

If a business owner believes they have experienced a loss of revenue due to the project, the owner will have the option to submit a claim. For questions about claims related to incidents that occurred within Los Angeles or Ventura counties, please call (213) 897-0816.

2 Will this project impact the goods movement with the ports?


Caltrans will be coordinating with both ports to minimize impacts to the extent feasible.



VINCENT THOMAS
BRIDGE

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