

NEWS

CONSTRUCTION KICKS OFF FOR GERALD DESMOND REPLACEMENT

\$1.3 Billion Port of Long Beach Project Being Built Under Agreement With Council

BY MARK EDWARD NERO

A key construction phase is starting at the Gerald Desmond Bridge replacement at the Port of Long Beach. Work has begun on the first set of bridge foundations, and the milestone was commemorated recently during a ceremony at which local and state officials saw firsthand the hard work by members of Building Trades local unions.

The bridge is being built under a Project Labor Agreement with the Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council.

During the Oct. 1 event at the port, Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia and members of the Long Beach City Council, as well as the city's Harbor Commission and California Dept. of Transportation representatives, gathered to view construction of foundation piles containing massive amounts of steel rebar and concrete.

The as-yet-unnamed replacement bridge, which will span the port, will be supported by about 350 piles built into the ground at depths down to 175 feet below the surface, with poured concrete and inserted steel rebar in pre-dug holes.

"It's very exciting to see the construction in full swing," Garcia said. "This new bridge will be a dramatic addition to the Long Beach skyline and it all starts here, with these solid concrete-and-steel foundations."



"This new bridge will be a dramatic addition to the Long Beach skyline," Mayor Robert Garcia tells the crowd.

Garcia, Harbor Commission President Doug Drummond and Port Chief Executive Jon Slingerup were joined at the event by, among others, Caltrans District 7 director Carrie Bowen and Bob Schraeder, design-build project manager for SFI, the joint venture contractor team comprising

Shimmick Construction Co., FCC Construcción S.A. and Impregilo SpA.

Most of those who addressed the crowd praised the work performed so far by Building Trades local union members.

An Iconic Bridge

other iconic structure in the port and in the Los Angeles area in general."

The massive building effort is expected to result in a total of 3,000 construction and construction-related jobs per year for at least the next three years, according to project spokesman Denis Wolcott.

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An Iconic Bridge

“The technological and engineering expertise involved in building these foundations is astounding,” Drummond said. “They will be supporting this iconic bridge for the next 100 years.”

Although the start of actual construction is relatively recent, prep work for the new bridge had been going on for about a year and a half, according to project spokeswoman Gina DePinto.

“A lot of that was clearing the oil field underground, so that’s where most of that

time went, and then they were doing some test piles and demolition of old structures that were in the way of the new bridge,” she explained, adding that it was June when the first pile was started and that the project really began ramping up from July through September.

“We still have a long way to go, but we’re in the range of 50 or 60 piles that are either completed or under construction at one stage or another,” she said. “We have 300 more to go.”

The sheer magnitude of the \$1.3 billion project and the work it brings has been very beneficial to the Building Trades, according to Iron Workers Local 416 President Marco Frausto. He said that as of early October, about 10 to 20 members of his local have been working on the project on any given day, but that the number is likely to rise to between 40 and 60 workers daily in the next few weeks.

“With the recession ending, this is perfect timing,” he said. “Now we’re putting everybody back to work. Local 416 and its members are proud to be building an-

at least the next three years,” according to project spokesman Denis Wolcott.

The new bridge is designed to include six traffic lanes and emergency shoulders, plus a higher clearance to accommodate new generations of cargo ships and a dedicated bicycle path and pedestrian walkway, including scenic overlooks.

When completed, it will be one of the taller bridges of its kind in the United States due to its two 515-foot towers.

The project’s a joint effort of the California Dept. of Transportation and the port, with funding contributions also made by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

When the current Desmond bridge was built over 45 years ago, cargo ships were one-sixth the size they are today, and the current bridge prevents the newest generation of cargo ships from reaching the inner channel. The replacement bridge will raise the clearance from 155 feet to 205 feet above the water.

60,000 Vehicles a Day

The Gerald Desmond Bridge, which opened in 1968 and is named after a former Long Beach City Council member and City Attorney, is a main egress point for trucks into the port. Upward of 60,000 vehicles a day cross its four traffic lanes and 1,200-foot-long span, located over the port’s main channel.

The Port of Long Beach and other stakeholders say they’re counting on the incoming bridge to dramatically improve the important commuter and trucking cor-

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