

Money

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has occurred since the county took over control of the bridge.

“We have deterioration on the actual girders that was not apparent when they did the inspection in 2006, but have become more apparent as they’ve delved into the inspection of this,” Foster said.

According to Foster, the county doesn’t have adequate information on the damage to the bridge’s substructure and has conducted a testing program to determine the depth and strength of the piles and load bearing capabilities.

Foster said the county would also need to undertake soil borings around the bridge.

“It’s very expensive to go out with a barge and take soil borings in the waterway. Because the bridge is not strong enough to support the

boring rigs we can’t go out on the bridge and do the borings from the bridge simply because the bridge cannot support the trucks.”

County Bridge Commission Executive Director Stephen O’Connor said the county could fund \$32 million in improvements that would increase the bridge’s life to 20 years and cost \$800,000 annually for 25 years.

The other option would be extensive repairs that would increase the bridge’s life to 50 years and cost \$43 million.

Cape May County Freeholder Director Daniel Beyel said the county would have to decide by the end of the year whether to repair the bridge.

He said the state would pay 60 percent and the county 40 percent of the replacement under an agreement with the DOT. User fees would pay for the county’s share.

“That bridge is 80 years

old. The Department of Transportation and county engineer would tell you that the normal life of a bridge deck is 50 years. The original proposal was to extend that life 15 years. We have very grave doubts about the feasibility and practicality of doing such,” Beyel said.

Beyel said the deck of the Beesley’s Point Bridge is “one of the worst areas you visibly see.” He said the speed limit on the bridge had to be reduced to 25 mph.

The Beesley’s Point Bridge carried 1.7 million vehicles each year when it was open to traffic.

Beyel said the bridge was important for tourism traffic, as an economic link for the region, for emergency vehicles transporting patients to Shore Memorial Hospital in Somers Point and as an evacuation route for natural disasters.

“Things have changed dra-

matically in the area with new businesses in Atlantic City and we have more people traveling now to different positions. This is a regional transportation issue when it comes to what needs to be done,” Beyel said.

According to Beyel, it would cost \$80 million to design and build a similar bridge. For a high-rise fixed non-movable bridge similar to one on the Garden State Parkway that spans the Great Egg Harbor Bay, the cost jumps to \$140 million. Adding extra lanes to the existing parkway bridge to accommodate additional traffic would cost \$100 million, Beyel said.

First District state Sen. Jeff Van Drew said the Beesley’s Point Bridge is a vital evacuation route for Cape May County.

“The State of New Jersey is spending a great deal of money all over this state on many projects. I’ve always

believed we need more attention paid to South Jersey on certain projects and safety issues. This is one of them,” Van Drew said.

John Withers, New Jersey Turnpike Authority supervising engineer, outlined the state’s proposed improvements for the Garden State Parkway in Cape May County, including replacing signalized intersections with interchanges at Shell Bay Avenue, Stone Harbor Boulevard and Crest Haven Road.

The interchanges would replace signalized intersections on the Garden State Parkway with ramps and overpasses.

Preliminary design on the interchanges is slated for May, and the complete final design is expected by December. Construction for the interchanges begins in May 2011 with a completion date of May 2013.

Other county projects

Foster presented an overview of county projects for its bridges and roadways.

The Cape May County Bridge Painting Program is funded by \$4.1 million from the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The project begins this spring and is slated for completion in July of 2011 and will target the Ocean Drive Bridge over Grassy Sound and the Ocean Drive Bridge over Townsends Inlet. Underlying paint on the bridges will be removed and an organic epoxy three-coat paint system will be applied.

Resurfacing improvements for Landis Avenue in Sea Isle City will begin this spring, with \$751,000 of roadway improvements from JFK Boulevard to 54th Street, Foster said.

Hall

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250 solar panels on the roof and taps into geothermal energy for heating and cooling. The new design also includes redirecting storm water from the roof to the landscaping.

The building, which is on the oceanfront, is designed to withstand winds of 120 mph and is strong enough to stand up to the 24 to 30 inches of snow from recent snowstorms.

An 8 to 12-foot wide walkway around the new structure is going to be made of wood, as requested by NJDEP. The original design called for concrete.

Due to the move, the city will lose some parking in front of Convention Hall, but according to Mahaney, the city was going to lose that parking anyway. The new



Courtesy of Kimmel-Bogrette Architecture

Above is a new rendering of the Cape May Convention Hall design as prepared by Kimmel-Bogrette Architects, Inc. The new design of the \$10.5 million project is 24 feet closer to Beach Avenue.

design calls for an emergency ramp in front of the building, wide enough for vehicles to gain access to the

Promenade.

“But given the new 60-degree angled parking we will be picking up most of

those spaces very nearby,” Mahaney said.

The new parking proposal calls for back-in angled parking spaces in wider sections of Beach Avenue. Some people have raised concerns about this kind of parking, but Mahaney said it’s time to try it.

“Bob Smith and I have looked at it. Philadelphia uses it in some locations,” he said, naming Oregon Avenue in South Philadelphia as an example. Smith is the public works supervisor.

“And the county endorses it,” he said.

Mahaney said the angled parking would only be on the ocean side and there will be the more traditional types of parking spaces nearby for people who can’t adjust to the idea of backing into an angled parking space. The new parking space system will be in

effect for the summer.

Mahaney also said the city advertised for bids for the demolition and new construction of Convention Hall. As of Monday, any contractor could purchase a disc for \$25, which has all specifications for the project. Mahaney said five major contractors had picked up discs, and they were expecting 20 to 25 contractors to bid on March 18. The city anticipates awarding a bid one week later, around March 31, and starting the construction by April 14. The projected completion day is May 27, 2011 – the Friday morning of Memorial Day weekend.

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Entered at Post Office in Pleasantville NJ 08232 as a periodical

**SUBSCRIPTION PRICES:** By mail in

Cape May County: \$22;  
East of Mississippi: \$25;  
West of Mississippi: \$29. Mail subscriptions paid in advance.  
Newsstand price\$.50 per copy.

**PUBLICATION SCHEDULE:**  
Weekly, every Thursday.

**POSTMASTER:**  
Send address change to Cape May Star and Wave, 600 Park Blvd. #28, West Cape May, NJ 08204.

**ASSISTANCE:**  
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