



Executive Offices
2492 River Road
New Hope, PA 18938-9519
TEL. (215) 862-5284 FAX (215) 862-7665

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 23, 2015

Contact: Joe Donnelly or Ethan Vickers
Phone: 215-862-7693 or 412-926-5730

SCUDDER FALLS BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT MOVES FORWARD WITH AWARD OF FINAL DESIGN CONTRACT

NEW HOPE, PA – The Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission today advanced preparations for the Scudder Falls Bridge Replacement Project with the award of a final design contract to a prominent engineering firm with international credentials.

The contract was authorized with the Hamilton Township, Mercer County, N.J. office of Michael Baker, Jr., Inc., a subsidiary of Michael Baker International, to provide final and post-design services for a not-to-exceed amount of \$22.49 million.

It's estimated that the project's final design stage will take 18 months to complete. At that time, the Commission will move to the process of putting project construction out to bid. It's currently anticipated that full construction activities will get underway in early 2017. The project is expected to take three to four years to complete. More precise construction start and end dates will be established toward the end of the final design.

The selection of the Michael Baker, Jr. engineering firm brings to a close the final design services selection process that got underway with the issuance and posting of a Request for Proposals (RFP) on August 20, 2014. A September 10 pre-proposal meeting at the Bucks County Sheraton Hotel's ballroom in Langhorne, PA. attracted 132 consultants representing 74 firms, including 38 Identified Business Enterprises. In the end, 10 firms submitted proposals by the October 30 deadline and Baker ultimately was determined to be the most qualified firm to design the multi-faceted regional transportation project.

"This project has been quite a while coming to this point and we are very excited and eager to get started on this next phase of preparations," said DRJTBC Executive Director Joseph J. Resta. "We intend to have this project designed and staged in a manner that will allow traffic to move unimpeded across the river at all times. The current bridge will remain in service until the first half of the replacement bridge is fully in place across the river and ready to carry traffic in both directions on a temporary basis."

The final design contract is the most significant project milestone since the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued a pivotal Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in June 2012, affirming the project's compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The project involves a heavily commuted 4.4-mile portion of the I-95 corridor extending from the Route 332/Yardley-Newtown Road exit in Bucks County, PA. and the Bear Tavern Road/Route 579 exit in Mercer County, N.J.

The congestion-prone highway segment is a choke point for commuter traffic between Bucks County, PA and Central Jersey. Traffic congestion at the bridge results in a 27 minute average delay for job commuters who use the bridge during peak travel periods each day.

Due to the inadequate number of lanes on the bridge, the absence of shoulders on the structure and poor roadway geometry at the bridge's adjoining interchanges, even minor accidents and emergencies at the bridge and its interchanges have been known to cause extended periods of regional gridlock. For these reasons, the nearly 55-year-old bridge and nearby ramps are classified as functionally obsolete.

Project Scope

To address recurring traffic safety and capacity problems at the bridge, its adjoining interchanges and approach roadways, the Commission is pursuing a comprehensive project for the highway segment. Project elements include:

- Replace the existing four-lane Scudder Falls Bridge (SFB) over the Delaware River with a twin-span structure carrying six lanes of through traffic (three in each direction), two auxiliary northbound lanes for entry/exit travel, and one auxiliary southbound lane for entry/exit travel.
- Completely overhaul the accident-prone Route 29/175 interchange on the New Jersey side.
- Reconfigure the Taylorsville Road interchange in Lower Makefield, PA. to improve the safety and efficiency of the interchange
- Make drainage upgrades and other improvements along the approach highway between the Route 29/175 interchange and Bear Tavern Road in New Jersey.
- Widen the Pennsylvania approach highway between the Route 332 exit and the bridge by adding an additional lane in each direction.
- Provide a bicycle/pedestrian walkway connecting the recreational canal paths on both sides of the river.
- Construct full inside and outside shoulders/breakdown lanes on both replacement bridge spans, a current highway standard requirement. (The bridge's inside shoulders will be sized to allow for future mass transit service.)
- Constructing an all-electronic toll (AET) collection system in the southbound direction, consisting of high-speed E-ZPass tag readers and video cameras to identify license plates for purposes of collecting tolls by mail from motorists who do not have E-ZPass. Such license plate tolling – with an administrative fee to cover the additional costs of non-E-Pass customers – is increasingly being used in other states and countries.
- Installing noise-abatement walls along the approach roadways leading to and from the bridge; areas eligible for noise-abatement have been designated in accordance with enhanced standards promulgated by the FHWA and used by state departments of transportation.

The project's program cost – a figure that includes construction, design, construction management, inspections, and all other related costs – is estimated at about \$327.5 million in the Commission's 2015 capital budget.

Background and Project Need

The existing bridge was designed and constructed in the late 1950s and was not intended to carry today's traffic volumes. The bridge's opening was delayed until June 1961 due to a delay in the construction of approach roadways. The bridge carried 1,583,595 vehicles during its first full year of service in 1962; in 2014, it carried 19,451,256 vehicles, or a daily average of 58,400.

Its structural design is of the same non-redundant, pin-and-hanger-connected two-girder type as the I-95/Mianus River Bridge that collapsed in Connecticut in 1983. The Commission took steps in the early 1990s to prevent a Mianus-type collapse, but the redundancy measures did not – and could not – add life to the bridge's road deck, which now has multiple pothole patches and other surface deterioration.

A rehabilitation of the bridge with a replacement of the current road deck would cost nearly \$80 million while causing crippling traffic delays and congestion because one or two lanes would need to be closed for extended periods. Additionally, such work would not address any of the numerous safety, traffic capacity and operational deficiencies in the current Scudder Falls highway corridor. Rehabilitation also would not sufficiently address the current bridge's previous loading history and non-redundancy.

According to volumes of environmental documentation the Commission compiled as part of the federal NEPA process, the project is being pursued for the following reasons:

- The current bridge is functionally obsolete and needs to be replaced to alleviate recurring current peak-period and emergency-incident traffic congestion and projected future traffic.
- Numerous commuter safety and operational upgrades are needed at the bridge and adjoining highway segments and interchanges in the two states; the SFB replacement project will improve mobility and provide a safe and reliable river crossing for vehicles, including interstate commercial shipments and regional emergency services such as ambulances and local fire squads.
- The bridge does not meet current FHWA or state standards.
- The geometry of the bridge, approach highways and interchanges do not meet current design standards.
- More than 100 accidents a year are recorded in the project area -- some have been fatal.
- The bridge lacks shoulders for breakdowns and emergencies as well as acceleration and deceleration lanes to carry traffic entering or exiting the highway at two interchanges that constructed in close proximity to the bridge decades ago. (Shoulders and proper auxiliary lanes are required elements for interstates under current federal design criteria).

Recent Activities

Since the issuance of the FONSI in June 2012, the Commission has engaged in further due-diligence preparations for the project. This has included:

- Completion of archaeological research and transfer of unearthed project-area artifacts for permanent storage at state museums in Trenton and Harrisburg.
- Acquisition of a variety of permits to carry out the project; this most recently included two approvals from the Bucks County Conservation District – one for erosion and sedimentation controls and another for project storm water management facilities design.
- Other permits completed and received in the past two years included a New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) Freshwater Wetland Individual Permit, NJDEP Flood Hazard Area Verification and Permit, NJDEP Freshwater Quality Certificate, and NJ Stormwater Management Design.

About the Commission

The Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission was formed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of New Jersey in 1934. It operates seven toll bridges and 13 toll-supported bridges, two of which are pedestrian-only spans. The Commission is a self-supporting public-service agency that receives neither federal nor state tax dollars to finance its projects or operations. Funding for the operations, maintenance and upkeep of its bridges and related transportation facilities is solely derived from revenues collected at its toll bridges. The Commission's jurisdiction extends along the Delaware River from the Philadelphia-Bucks County line north to the New Jersey/New York border. The bridges carried more than 138.2 million cars and commercial vehicles in 2014. For more information about the Commission and its various initiatives to deliver safer and more convenient bridge travel for its customers, please see: www.drjtbc.org.

###