

Will a Two-Year Bridge Project Bring Disruption Back to LA-Long Beach?

The Gist: Panelists reviewed Caltrans’ 16-month redecking closure of the Vincent Thomas Bridge and the multi-agency plan to minimize cargo disruption at the Los Angeles–Long Beach port complex. Speakers detailed schedules, detours, technology deployments, operational contingencies, and a parallel exploration of a privately financed replacement bridge. While expecting challenges, they forecast delays measured in minutes, not days.

Key takeaways

- Megella said the deck of the Vincent Thomas Bridge was rated as “poor,” necessitating a 16-month closure, with detours via the 710, 110, 405 and 103 freeways, as well as local routes.
- He said nightly westbound closures from 10:45 pm to 6:45 am would begin March 23, followed by paving in July, and a full closure starting Nov. 1.
- Seroka said only about 8% of the port’s containers use the bridge, and delays are expected to be measured in minutes.
- He described 700 port cameras and joint action by public safety, terminal operators, and truckers to resolve backups swiftly.
- Seroka said reroutes will favor the 710 and 110 freeways, adding that geospatial mapping will help to optimize flows.
- McCorkle said stakeholders spent 18 to 24 months preparing, focusing on detecting choke points in real time and retiming signals quickly.
- He said terminals will add “hoot” (night) gates if needed, ensure workforce access, and communicate detours to keep cargo moving.
- Megella said Caltrans will fund traffic officers, LAPD enforcement, and an LA Fire lifeline unit on Terminal Island to speed responses.
- Megella said the \$750 million project will extend the life of the bridge by 50 to 75 years, avoiding recurring maintenance closures.
- Schrap said communication will be critical, warning passenger traffic could push cut-throughs, and urged hoot shifts to avoid congestion.
- Schrap also cautioned missed container arrivals can cascade into canceled appointments and urged coordinated terminal actions and off-dock return options.
- Seroka also outlined plans exploring a taller, three-lane replacement bridge that would be privately financed and industry-operated.

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