

Bay Bridge Replacement vs CA Water Fix/Delta Tunnels



Bay Bridge Eastern Span History

Costs and Time

The Bay Bridge Replacement was estimated to cost \$1.5 billion by CalTrans with a seven-year construction period. Depending on how one counts the years, construction took fourteen years and cost \$6.4 billion. ¹

Seismic risk

“Californians spent \$6.4 billion to replace the old Bay Bridge eastern span because it was unlikely to survive a major earthquake. Now, mounting revelations of construction problems are calling into question whether the new bridge can withstand the Big One.”
*Jaxon Van Derbeken SF Chronicle, May 11, 2015*³

Delta Tunnels History

Costs and Time

\$250 million dollars has been spent on Delta tunnels planning and processes to date paid for by public water agencies, state, and federal agencies before one shovel of dirt has been turned. The project only has a preliminary engineering report completed without full design. The project is reported to cost \$15 billion without interest, operation costs, or allowance for cost over runs. Project construction time has been extended from 10 to 14 years.²

Seismic risk

“Listening to the governor, earthquake protection is the main economic argument. But the state’s experts estimated seismic-risk reduction to water exports was only worth a cumulative \$400 million over 50 years. Why is this value so low? First, it is a very low probability event even in the most pessimistic models. Second, the outage to water exports isn’t as bad as you hear in TV commercials. Department of Water Resources Director Mark Cowin correctly described it as “weeks or months” in a recent media call, not years. In a worst-case earthquake scenario, the tunnels might prevent 2 million to 3 million acre-feet in lost water exports, a costly but manageable shortage. For comparison, the current drought has cut surface water

¹ [SF Gate: Lengthy costly trail to Bay Bridge’s Eastern Span](#)

² [The Guardian: \\$8bn habitat conservation plan scrapped as California prioritises agribusiness](#)

³ [SF Gate: Plague of problems puts Bay Bridge seismic safety in question](#)

(Seismic risk continued)

supplies to farms and cities by more than 10 million acre-feet.

“The earthquake argument is not only economically wrong, it is morally outrageous. The real damage from what some call California’s Katrina would be death and destruction in the Delta itself. The state’s model of this tragedy shows hundreds could die and that 80 percent of the economic damage was from the loss of property and infrastructure in the Delta.” *Dr. Jeff Michael, University of the Pacific: Sacramento Bee, July 25, 2015*⁴

Outsourced Project

The Bay Bridge was an outsourced project. Now the landmark has become a debacle as defects have been found with the made-in-China part/bolts/rods installed. The question now is if the bridge will be safe for future generations after additional repairs and part replacements.^{5 6}

Outsourced Project

Billions will be spent on imported tunneling machinery, resulting in a public works project that will only create 5.5 construction jobs for every \$1 million spent. Those building the machinery are not experts on Delta soils, levees, water tables, or ecology.⁷

Lack of Transparency & Oversight

“Senior officials who oversaw construction of the \$6.5 billion eastern span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge repeatedly and deliberately brushed off criticism about construction problems and sought to keep information secret as part of an “institutionalized, if not malicious, lack of transparency in the project.” *Juliet Williams, AP, August 1, 2014*⁸

Lack of Transparency & Oversight

Department of Water Resources awarded an \$11.4 million no-bid contract to the Hallmark Group in 2012 for the Design Center Entity housed within the Department. Claiming, but not specifying the loophole through which they awarded the contract, DWR gave the contract for the second largest public works project in the history of California to Chuck Gardner, who does not head an engineering firm, but a small water policy administrative team.⁹

⁴ [Special to Sac Bee: Cost of tunnels doesn’t add up](#)

⁵ [The New York Times: Bridge Comes to San Francisco With a Made-in-China Label](#)

⁶ [SF Gate: Bay Bridge’s troubles: How a landmark became a debacle](#)

⁷ [Valley Economy Blog: The Fictional Scenario Behind BDCP Jobs Claims](#)

⁸ [KQED News: Bay Bridge Report: Caltrans Worked to Keep Construction Flaws Quiet](#)

⁹ Documents showing the awarding of this contract were recently obtained through a PRA Request and are available upon for review. Contact Restore the Delta.