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Funding secured for dam bridge

By: Cheri March

A new bridge that will relieve traffic for thousands is inching its way closer to completion.

Rep. John Doolittle (R-Roseville) announced last week that he had obtained \$14 million in funding for Folsom's new bridge.

Secured through a member-sponsored initiative, the funding completes the \$62.7 million required federal share for the project—a bridge that will span the America River south of the Folsom dam, aiding Sacramento, El Dorado, and Placer county commuters.

Congress authorized the bridge as part of the Doolittle-Matsui compromise, made after Folsom Dam Road was closed for security reasons in 2003. The road's closure rerouted the estimated 18,000 drivers that used it daily onto older Folsom roads, causing traffic congestion and financial losses to local businesses.

The new bridge, a roughly \$115 million collaboration between the Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers, will accommodate up to 40,000 daily vehicles, the number expected to use it within the next 50 years.

It will also handle bicycle and pedestrian traffic with an on-street bike lane.

The Corps will pay for approximately two-thirds of the project and Folsom will cover the remaining one-third.

Construction is already well underway. Contractor Kiewit Pacific Company, who built Folsom's light rail extension and is presently at work on the Benicia-Martinez Bridge, recently poured 650 yards of concrete to place the bridge's footing, said Corps spokeswoman Jennifer Mijares.

For the next four weeks, crews on the west side of the bridge—near Folsom-Auburn Road—will be crushing rocks to be used in the base of the new roadway.

"It might get a little noisy for residents," Mijares said. Similar work is happening off Natoma Street, where crews are excavating and grading.

Workers are on the job 12 hours a day, six days a week. "This is a really fast-paced project.," Mijares said. "We're working hard to get this open by early 2009."

Doolittle said he was pleased with the timeframe.

"Commuters are going to get much-needed relief only five years after the initial project approval," he said of the bridge. "The entire project has been an enormous success for our region."



Bars of reinforcing steel, known as rebar, rise from the base of what will be the concrete abutment on the eastern, or Natoma Street side, of the Folsom bridge. Abutments support the ends of the bridge, and the rebar strengthens them. For this bridge, just two columns will support the roadway, or deck. The tower cranes -- soaring 230 feet above the construction site -- mark the location of the columns. The site for the west abutment, rising behind the far crane, is still being graded. Linda Holderness/Special to the Telegraph

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