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Open Letter To LB Port Bridge Commision

March 10, 2010

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by Drew

Dear Port Of Long Beach Bridge Commission:

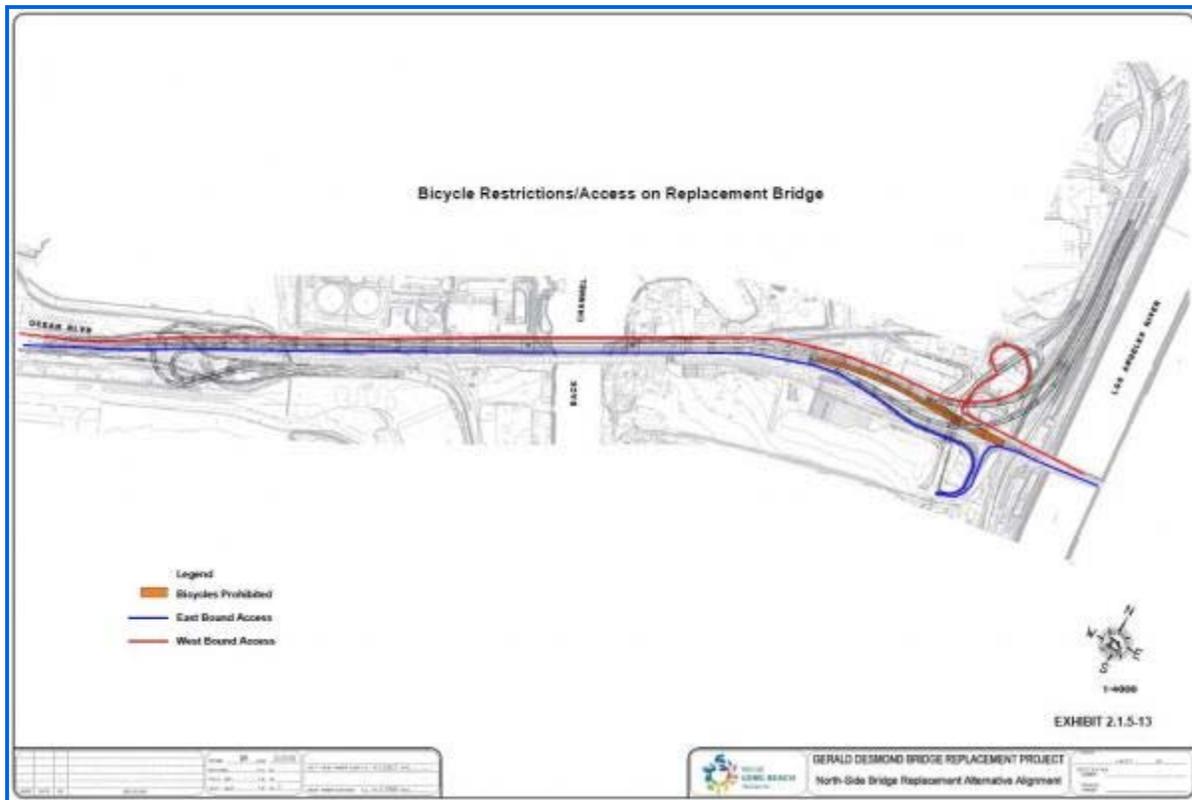
If I'm not mistaken, the Port of Long Beach has something of an interest in becoming "green", or at least creating an eco-friendly public image. The port has instituted its [green port policy](#) while also launching a massive publicity campaign to establish environmental credibility, including billboards, internet ads, and a vast series of pamphlets, newsletters, and videos. This is certainly commendable; the port has traditionally been a large source of pollution throughout the region, making environmental reform a welcome change. However, I fear the port's latest major undertaking – a replacement for the Gerald Desmond Bridge – falls short of the port's noble green goals.

The replacement is planned as a [sleek, cable-stayed bridge](#), the first to be built on the West Coast. It will certainly be pleasant to look at, and is designed to be more efficient in handling truck traffic. But the replacement is lacking a critical feature, one which would greatly increase the environmentally friendliness, accessibility, and overall effectiveness of the bridge: a pathway for bicycles and pedestrians.

Why is there no pedestrian walkway? The revised [draft environmental impact report](#) for the replacement bridge offers this line of reasoning:

Terminal Island is an industrial area within the Harbor District where there is currently no residential, retail, or public recreational facilities. Since the closing of the Naval Shipyard and the opening of the Pier T container terminal, there has been low demand from nonmotorized traffic (e.g., pedestrians or bicycles) on Ocean Boulevard over the Gerald Desmond Bridge, despite a patchwork of sidewalks that exist along the roadway. In addition, Terminal Island does not include any designated bicycle route... Both pedestrians and cyclists can utilize the regularly scheduled bus service equipped with bicycle racks provided by the Los Angeles Department of Transportation to travel between downtown Long Beach, Terminal Island, and San Pedro. A designated bike route exists to the north of the Port on Anaheim Street at the northern edge of the Harbor District.

Having invested so heavily in a green brand, and ostensibly committed to genuine environmental reform, the port would surely have a great interest in promoting walking and bicycling – two of the most energy efficient forms of transportation. But here we see the port working *against* walkers and cyclists. It's true that Terminal Island and the Port complex are difficult to navigate on foot or bicycle, but this is because current conditions are not yet suitable; as the DEIR notes, there is only a "patchwork" network of sidewalks. The existing bike route on Anaheim and LADOT bus service are hardly workable solutions: the bike route is a 3 mile detour between downtown Long Beach and San Pedro, and bus service is infrequent.



The port has been thoughtful enough to supply a proposed “Bike Restrictions/Access” map. This supposed bike access route would involve bikes having to follow a circuitous route, exiting and reentering the road on offramps and then having to travel in the breakdown lane. This is a route that would make even the most hardened road cyclist balk.

What is particularly painful about the replacement bridge’s pathway deficiency is that the current bridge actually *includes* one. It is far from perfect, but if coupled with further improvements it would be workable. The port is electing to make the situation even worse for cyclists and pedestrians, instead it should be working to reinstate bike and pedestrian access on the bridge, improve it on the other roads in its jurisdiction, and encourage the Port of Los Angeles to do likewise on its bridges and roads.

In San Francisco and Oakland, there is an effort being made to [add bike and pedestrian access](#) to the Oakland-Bay Bridge, here we are *removing* it. Is this something an environmentally conscious port would do? I think not. The Long Beach-San Pedro corridor can be seen as a smaller scale version of the Northern California span: Both are long and traverse industrial port regions, but have dense population and employment centers on either side. But in order for progress to be made, broad improvements in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. This will not happen if the port continues on its regressive course to remove pedestrian access from the bridge.

It is my hope that the port will make good on its green aspirations, by including a bicycle/pedestrian pathway on the Gerald Desmond replacement bridge.

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1.

Art Wong [permalink](#)

March 11, 2010 9:31 am

I'm with the Port of Long Beach.

We invite you, really anyone, to comment on our draft Environmental Impact Report.

The Port is accepting written comments on the EIR, sent to Richard Cameron, Director of Environmental Planning, Port of Long Beach, 925 Harbor Plaza, Long Beach, CA 90802, or by e-mail to cameron@polb.com. Comments are due by 4:30 p.m., March 22, 2010.

2.

[Drew](#) [permalink](#)

March 12, 2010 4:26 pm

Thanks Art. I do appreciate the port's receptiveness to community input, as well as the progress you have made over the years. Now let's see if you can build a bridge with good bike/ped access! I have sent this letter to Richard Cameron in writing, you're more than welcome to forward him the link to this article. Anyone who wants to contact the port can do so via the addresses you have been kind enough to leave, or by clicking through the links above.