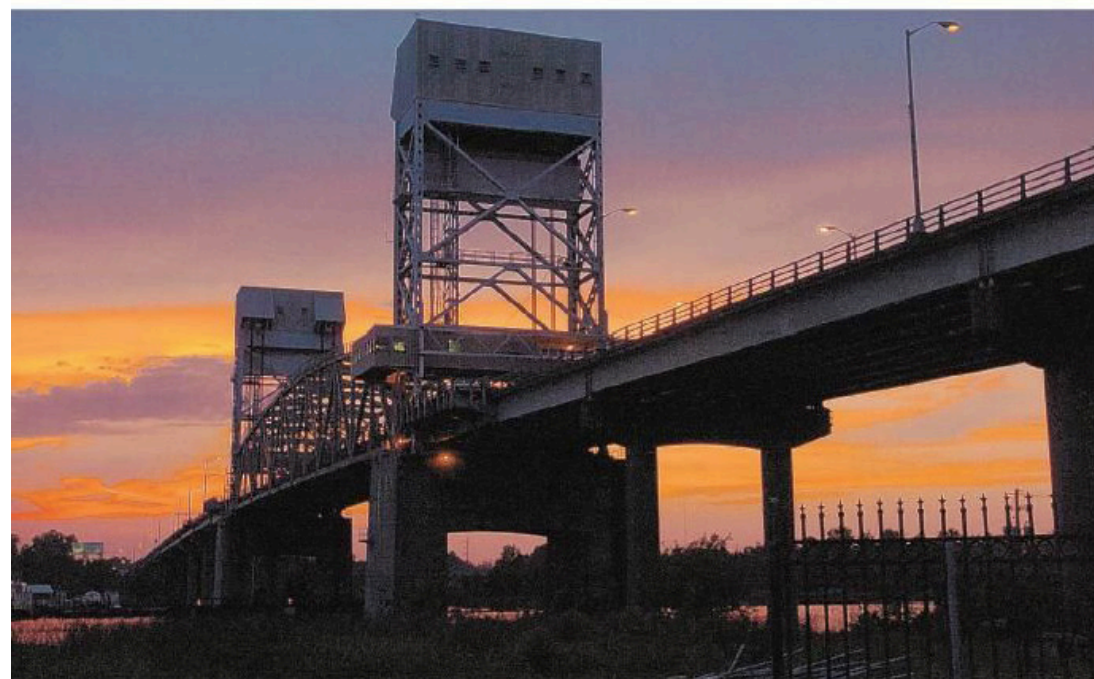


WITH SKYWAY PROJECT ON HOLD AND TRAFFIC GETTING WORSE, OFFICIALS LOOKING FOR WAYS OF ...

BRIDGING THE GAP



Opened in 1969, the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge is struggling to carry its current load of 52,700 vehicles a day. Traffic on the bridge is forecast to jump to 113,700 vehicles a day by 2035 if another crossing is not built, and will increase to 81,600 cars a day even if one is built. *StarNews file photos*

‘Skyway’ becomes a dirty word as planners look for cheaper alternatives

BY ADAM WAGNER
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As the Cape Fear Skyway project continues to gather dust, planners and local officials – not to mention motorists – are increasingly eager to find a solution to the growing traffic overload between Leland and Wilmington.

City and transportation leaders hope that a Nov. 26 workshop at Wilmington City Hall will kick the decision-making process into gear.

Sky-high price

Organizers are hesitant now to use the Skyway label for any future construction.

“The name Cape Fear Skyway gives the stigma of a \$1 billion bridge, and what we’re trying to do is develop the best transportation solution that improves the mobility and safety throughout the region,” said Mike Kozlosky, executive director of the Wilmington

BRIDGE RELIEF OPTIONS

NEW SOUTHERN CROSSING

The Cape Fear Skyway project seems to be dead in the water because of its high cost. But some think a new high-rise bridge south of town is still a possibility.

ENHANCED MEMORIAL BRIDGE

Replacing or adding onto the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge would be cheaper than a high-rise project, and Leland officials support that. But Wilmington leaders worry about the impact of additional traffic on the downtown area.

INTERIM MEASURES

Two projects already in the works – completion of the Interstate 140 bypass into Brunswick County and the six-laning of the causeway between Wilmington and Leland – will do a lot to ease the traffic crunch. But officials agree something more will still be needed.

Metropolitan Planning Organization.

“The end project – if it’s a new location facility – may not be a cable-stay bridge, or it might be a lesser project than the

\$1 billion bridge that everybody has in mind.”

Recent maintenance assured that the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge will last at least 40 more years, officials say.

At the same time, though, it demonstrated that the bridge is struggling to carry its current load of 52,700 vehicles a day.

Traffic on the Memorial Bridge is forecast to jump to 113,700 vehicles a day by 2035 if another crossing is not built, and will increase to 81,600 cars a day even if one is.

“Even simple maintenance (on the bridge) can cause some hardship for the communities in the area,” said Bobby Lewis, the DOT’s chief of staff.

Construction on the Interstate 140 bypass, expected to wrap up in 2016, could ease traffic on the Memorial Bridge and the causeway between Leland and Wilmington.

“The I-140 bypass, when that’s completed, will drastically change how traf-

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