



QUENTIN ROUX/MARCO ISLAND SUN TIMES

This Aug. 26 photo of the bridge work shows the substructures rising out of the water in the foreground to the right of the existing bridge.

Progress evident soon on new Jolley Bridge

BY QUENTIN ROUX
Marco Island Sun Times

Progress on the second bridge span linking Marco Island to the mainland will soon be more evident and visible as its substructures rise higher out of the water, construction officials said.

Work on the new S.S. Jolley Bridge section — financed by government

stimulus money — began last fall on the \$25 million project.

It is still expected to be completed around fall 2011.

"The project is still very much on schedule," said Debbie Tower, Florida Department of Transportation spokeswoman. "At the moment people still see just the cranes in the water as they drive over the bridge, but they will now see more about a month to six weeks' time."

The existing bridge was

"rehabilitated" to the tune of about \$9 million by the end of 2009, Tower said, effectively increasing its life span by another 20 or so years, she said.

"The city (of Marco Island), Collier County and the Department of Transportation had all considered the bridge a priority," Tower said.

At one stage, building two new spans was debated, but total cost of around \$60 million — prohibitive, given the difficult economic times, she said.

When the stimulus money became available, the current plan was adopted as being the best option, Tower said, adding that replacement of the older span will obviously be considered as it nears the end of its second lease on life.

Reduction of congestion, backups and accidents are the reasons for adding a second span, Tower said.

It will also enhance emergency evacuations from the island if a disaster occurs, according to Tower.

The daily average for vehicles using the bridge during 2008 was 25,000, according to FDOT.

The daily average is projected to grow to about 43,000 vehicles in 2030.

Roadway work began in late April with the shifting of the existing bridge's two lanes slightly to the east so workers had room to work on the new bridge, and perform roadway work.

The project will also include roadwork on the south and north ends of the bridges to expand County Road 951 and Collier Boulevard to four lanes from two.

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