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Friendship Trail Bridge

Costly prognosis for failing bridge

Rehabilitation runs in the millions

Updated: Wednesday, 27 May 2009, 3:49 PM EDT
Published : Wednesday, 27 May 2009, 3:49 PM EDT

Andrea Lypka/MyFoxTampaBay.com

ST. PETERSBURG - A new report outlines costly options for repairing and maintaining the Friendship Trail Bridge, and says the costs would only extend the lifespan of the bridge for a limited amount of time.

The Friendship Trail Bridge and fishing pier was closed in December because of major structural flaws.

Estimated costs and rehabilitation options for the recreational bridge are more than \$10 million, according to the follow-up engineering report by Kisinger Campo & Associates and SDR Engineering Consultants.

The repair of the recreational bridge would cost \$15 million. This would only extend the life of the bridge an additional 10 years before it would need to be demolished, according to the report.

The follow-up report also concluded that demolishing the

entire bridge and building two new fishing piers now at either end of the bridge in its current location would cost \$17.5 million. But these piers might eventually need to be relocated when a new Gandy Bridge is built, after the current one outlives its life span.

But repairing just the spans from the entrances to the ends of the catwalks would cost \$10 million. This would include demolishing the high span of the bridge. But the repaired sections would still only be structurally sound for 10 years, and require eventual demolition.

To demolish the entire bridge and building new fishing piers off the new Gandy Bridge after it is constructed would cost \$13 million, and an additional estimated \$6.5 million to build the new piers in the future, according to the report.

Public meetings will be held in June in both Hillsborough and Pinellas counties to allow residents the opportunity to give feedback on the report. The Friendship Trail Oversight Committee is then expected to give a recommendation to the two county commissions on the future of the bridge.

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