

Port Authority winnows field of Goethals Bridge finalists to 3

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Staten Island Advance/Bill Lyons Narrow span that connects Staten Island and Elizabeth is to be replaced with a modern structure, at cost of \$1.5 billion.

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- It won't be your father's new Goethals Bridge. For starters, private interests will be largely responsible for the design, financing, construction and maintenance of the span that is to replace the 83-year-old Goethals.

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which operates the Goethals, has winnowed to three the number of teams that can bid on the \$1.5 billion job; eight teams had answered the Request for Qualifications.

The finalists, comprising local and global corporations, are: NYNJ Link Partnership, based in New York City; Metro Bridge Partners of Whitestone, Queens, and Goethals Bridge Development Group based in Coral Gables, Fla. It's the first time the Port Authority is looking to partner to such an extent with the private sector.

"This is an important step in advancing the process and making this innovative public-private partnership a reality to the benefit of the region," said PA spokesman Steve Coleman, in a statement.

The PA would still be responsible for collecting tolls and paying back the successful bidder over 30-40 years, with interest to be reset annually per the Consumer Price Index and other metrics, according to the initial Request for Information.

The new bridge will include six lanes of traffic, each 12 feet wide, per national standards.

There will be shoulders — which the current span lacks — and a 10-foot-wide pedestrian and bike walkway on the north side.

In the center of the bridge will be space dedicated for future bus lanes or light rail, the PA confirmed.

"The bridge needs to be replaced," said Borough President James Molinaro. "It can't handle the traffic it has today."

It would cost \$80 million to refurbish the existing bridge, but that would not solve safety issues or address the lane-width problem, Molinaro said.

He described the public/private partnership as "the right thing to do," which will allow the PA to replace the bridge now rather than wait for it to come up with the financing for the project on its own.

If all goes according to schedule, work on the \$1.5 billion project should begin in 2013.