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MCM Making Mark on the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge with Series of Successful Projects

Recent President's Day Weekend Detour Project Lauded for High Level of Teamwork, Early Finish

By Carol Eaton



MCM Construction's work on the Oakland Touchdown detour project over the President's Day weekend 2012 is shown here.

(Photo by Bill Hall, courtesy of California Department of Transportation)

MCM Construction, Inc. scored another high-profile success this President's Day weekend when it completed critical work on the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge project well ahead of schedule, enabling Caltrans to reopen the westbound deck about a day-and-a-half earlier than planned.

The February 17-19, 2012 westbound detour project represents just one small portion of the work that MCM has completed or currently has underway on the Bay Bridge, which is undergoing a major seismic retrofit and new East span construction. Two additional contracts include the approximately \$185 million Oakland Touchdown (OTD) phase 1 project, which MCM successfully completed in 2010, and the current \$81 million Yerba Buena Island Transition Structure (YBITS) project that is slated for completion in late 2013.

The well-orchestrated President's Day weekend detour project benefitted from strong teamwork among MCM, its subcontractors and Caltrans; thorough planning and upfront coordination; extensive public outreach efforts; as well as a measure of good fortune when potential rain that had been in the forecast for the weekend did not materialize.

"Everything was very well planned out and well-coordinated," comments MCM Construction Executive Project Manager, Treasurer & General Counsel Ed Puchi. "We had mobilized much of the construction equipment in advance and everything was there on site, ready to roll. Really the controlling factor was the weather and temperature, because polyester concrete is so sensitive to weather. The fact that there was no rain at all Friday night was a real plus."

Difficult Access

Prior to the shutdown, accessing the area where the realignment work would take place presented a key challenge, according to Puchi.

"We were literally wedged between the

Bay on the north side and the eastbound traffic on the south side,” he says. “Access was very difficult, very tight, but we were able to get in there with some specialized equipment to not only brace the steel structure of the existing bridge, since we were going to remove a portion of it, but also to build the foundation and the supports for the portion of the bridge that we had to attach to.”

The next challenge was to determine exactly where the removal limits would be from the existing structure. “We wanted to make sure we removed sufficient portions of the bridge to make room for the (soon to be awarded) Oakland Touchdown 2 project, and we wanted to do as much of the removal as possible while there was no traffic on the bridge,” says Puchi.

The weekend detour project had three major components for MCM and its subcontractors, including Bay Cities Paving & Grading, American Civil Constructors, Cleveland Wrecking, Chrisp Co., Lane Safety, Danny’s Construction, PARC Specialty Contractors and Penhall.

The project included placing a polyester concrete overlay so that the pavement surface transitioning from the new alignment portion to the existing bridge would be smooth, paving all of the 15 transition lanes starting from the metering lights which then narrow down to the five lanes that carry traffic over the westbound Bay Bridge, and restriping the lanes along with installation of a barrier rail on both sides. Caltrans also took advantage of the rare closure to complete other needed maintenance work on the bridge.

Racing to Open Early

The clock started ticking on the project at 8 p.m. Friday, when the CHP began clearing the bridge of traffic. A mere 12 minutes after the first cones were laid, crews were given the green light and set to work grinding up the old pavement, followed by paving work. The temperature-sensitive polyester concrete overlay operation got underway Saturday morning, and by that night pavement operations were complete, followed by the striping work on Sunday.

Caltrans reopened the upper deck of the bridge at 7 p.m. on February 19, about

34 hours earlier than the deadline that had been set for 5 a.m. Tuesday morning – averting some of the potential traffic jams that could have occurred had the closure followed its full course.

“That was our target,” Puchi says. “We believe traffic would have been a real nightmare at the end of a three-day weekend without the bridge reopening then. And the transition was very smooth.”

With westbound traffic now safely moved to the new alignment, crews can finish the easternmost part of new bridge and move forward with its goal to open the new span to all motorists in late 2013.

Oakland Touchdown 1 Project

The success that MCM achieved on the weekend shutdown detour work followed its previously successful completion of the OTD phase 1 project, which was completed in 2010 on track and with no claims or disputes.

Located just west of the Toll Plaza, the Oakland Touchdown will introduce westbound drivers to the new East Span as it

carries traffic from Interstate 80 onto the sweeping side-by-side decks of the Skyway. For eastbound drivers from San Francisco, this section of the bridge will carry them from the Skyway into the East Bay. The project involves building the east and westbound roadways and a new electrical substation, in addition to extensive relocation of underground utilities.

MCM Construction’s contract for OTD phase one entailed building most of the structure, including approximately 1,000 feet of the westbound lanes, of which 650 feet is over the bay waters, and about 600 feet of the eastbound lanes. A major accomplishment on the project was MCM’s ability to mitigate significant environmental impact to the bay shore environment. Rather than dredging the bottom of the bay and driving piles from a barge, the company chose to build a temporary trestle from the Oakland side out over the water from which it executed the work.

Completed in June 2010, the OTD phase one project received an AGC of California Partnering Award of Excellence in 2011.

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YBITS Project on Track

Currently MCM is underway with the YBITS project, which broke ground in April of 2010 and is on track for an on-time or early completion in late 2013. This project will connect the Self-Anchored Suspension Span (SAS) to Yerba Buena Island (YBI), and will transition the new East Span's side-by-side road decks to the upper and lower decks of the YBI tunnel and West Span.

Crews face the challenge of building the YBITS without disrupting traffic. To accomplish this, eastbound and westbound traffic were shifted off the original roadway over YBI and onto a temporary detour in 2009. That detour connects the East Span traffic to the tunnel. Drivers are using the detour, just south of the original roadway, until traffic is moved onto the new East Span. Due to a conflict between the YBITS and the original East Span, traffic was routed to the detour so crews can demolish the conflicting portion of the bridge leading



MCM-led crews at work on the YBITS project in late 2011.

to the YBI tunnel, and build the YBITS while traffic safely travels adjacent to the construction.

Protecting YBI's extensive military history, which dates back to the 1800s, is a particular consideration on this project. Currently home to an active coast guard station, YBI saw its first military post and depot built in 1868. Since then the island has been home to a torpedo station (the torpedo shed still stands on the eastern shore) and a U.S. Naval Training Station.

Partnering Key

For MCM Construction, the YBITS project has brought plenty of challenges, including the need to maintain 24/7 access for the Coast Guard that is stationed on the island. The project team has again utilized formalized partnering with Caltrans to foster a collaborative, solution-oriented approach that has kept the project moving forward as planned.

Overall, Puchi says involvement on the Bay Bridge reconstruction represents a “landmark project” that this Sacramento-based contractor is honored to be a part of.

“We have always prided ourselves on building the landmark projects all over the state – everything from the Century Freeway in Los Angeles, to the Confusion Hill project on the North Coast, and now the Bay Bridge” he says. “This truly is the type of a project that comes along once in a lifetime.” ■