



Bay Bridge still closed Friday morning

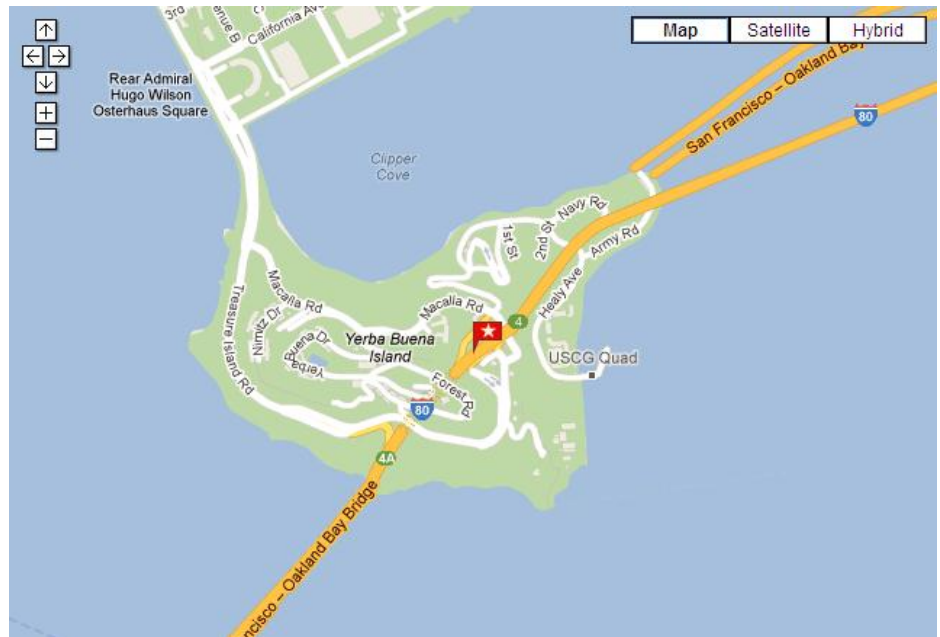
Crews are furiously working to fix the bridge

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OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) - Commuters confronted a third day of heavy congestion as officials kept the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge closed to finish emergency repairs.

Officials said Friday the bridge would likely remain closed through the evening commute and urged people to plan accordingly.

The state Transportation Department had hinted at the possibility of reopening the span for the Friday morning commute, then backed off. Spokesman Bart Ney said he still cannot give an exact time for when repairs and inspections will be complete.



Crews are furiously working to fix a section of the bridge where two rods and a crossbar broke and fell onto westbound lanes Tuesday. The pieces were part of major repairs done over Labor Day weekend.

Repairs were delayed Friday after new rods were installed while crews waited for the delivery of more 2-inch steel plates to help further strengthen a steel saddle, said Ed Puchi, spokesman for MCM Construction, Inc., the contractor doing the work.

The saddle was installed to strengthen a crack on a key structural beam on the bridge.

After the new plates are installed, the new rods will be stretched for four to five hours to test for stress. Then Caltrans will conduct further tests before the bridge is reopened.

"We're not sure how long it's going to take to make those modifications, and what Caltrans wants to do in terms of tests," Puchi said.

Meanwhile, some drivers have clogged nearby bridges for their commute, while others have helped push Bay Area Rapid Transit ridership to record levels this week.