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Bridge construction timetable could be halved; More one-on-one meetings with developers scheduled

Innovative partnerships and an accelerated construction schedule could cut the estimated 12-year completion timetable for the Ohio River Bridges project by as much as half, members of the Authority's Finance and Construction Planning Committee were told at their meeting March 30, 2011.

That was one of the conclusions that came out of one-on-one meetings with top developers at an Industry Forum held in Louisville last month. Nearly 900 contractors, developers, engineering and design firms, investors and technology providers registered for the forum, designed to get ideas on ways to cut costs and speed construction of the bridges project.

The second day of the Forum featured individual meetings with eight top firms. A second series of one-on-one meetings is being arranged for early April.

"The one-on-one sessions were incredibly productive, but we weren't able to meet with all the firms that requested meetings, so we're following up with the other firms," said Steve Schultz, executive director of the Bridges Authority, the bi-state agency responsible for overseeing the project.

The firms attending the one-on-one sessions made a number of recommendations, including:

- The project needs a single "owner" supported and empowered by both states.
- Delivery schedule can be accelerated considerably.
- Companies strongly prefer performance specifications rather than detailed design (greater opportunity to innovate).
- There is significant market capacity and appetite for a project of this size.
- Local/regional businesses, including Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) firms, will play a core role in project delivery.
- The procurement process can begin prior to completion of NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) studies, but there is a need to eliminate uncertainty as early as possible.

The Committee also heard reports at the meeting on a number of critical project development activities that have progressed since the last Authority meeting, including:

In cooperation with the project sponsors, the Federal Highway Administration launched the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) process on February 15 with the publication of a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register.

The cost reduction initiatives announced by Governor Beshear, Governor Daniels and Mayor Fischer in early January provide the framework of a new alternative that will be examined as part of the SEIS process. The engineering teams are looking for additional cost saving opportunities while defining this alternative to take into the environmental process. Wilbur Smith and Associates has completed the project's time-of-day travel demand model. This state of the art model will be used for traffic forecasting to support the NEPA effort, revenue forecasts to support the Bridges Authority's development of a tolling policy, and will assist the Authority and State Sponsors in a value of money analysis that will define the appropriate project-delivery model.

A Letter of Interest was submitted to U.S. Department of Transportation for credit assistance under the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program.

The Louisville-Southern Indiana Ohio River Bridges Project is one of the nation's largest transportation projects and calls for reconfiguring Louisville's Kennedy Interchange (Spaghetti Junction) and building two new bridges, one downtown and the other in the metro area's east end. When completed, the project is expected to reduce accidents by as much as 50%, cut travel time by more than half through Spaghetti Junction during rush hour and create thousands of new jobs.

[CLICK HERE TO READ STORY: Directional drilling underway for Project's 2,000-foot twin tunnels.](#)