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# **Building New Bridges: A Frustrating, Costly Process, but a Proposal to Get 3 Bridges built in the Next 5 years**

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## Introduction

The process to build a new bridge (or, bridges) across the Ohio River has been a frustrating process to say the least. Since the overall interstate system was mapped out in the late 1940's /early 1950's, an East End Bridge has been proposed. Thus, it has been over 50 years in the planning stage and its ultimate completion is still not determined.

The process to building the previous interstate bridges (Kennedy and Minton) took about 15 years from discussion to cutting the ribbons. Serious discussion of a new East End Bridge began in the late 1980s. There have been 23 years of discussion with little physical progress to show for it, with costs soaring upwards of 2000%

Thus, I have assembled the following timeline of all this back-and-forth discussion. Listed are only critical milestones per my interpretation. Most of this information was featured in the Courier-Journal newspaper.

## Here is a brief Executive Summary:

- There have been at least four public surveys in the Courier-Journal, and, they all listed about the same responses: 66% to 76% of the respondents favored an East End Bridge. Thus, there has been a sustained overwhelming public support for an East End Bridge.
- The cost and deadline has greatly changed and grown over these 2 decades:
  - 1990: the East End Bridge was proposed to cost \$200 Million.
  - 1993: \$253 Million for the East End Bridge with completion in 2010; the downtown bridge was estimated at \$115 Million; or a total of \$368 Million
  - 1997: Both bridges proposed to cost \$517 Million; the east would be done by 2008 and the Downtown by 2018
  - 1997: East End Bridge to be built by 2014
  - 2002: Both bridges completed by 2012 at total cost of \$1.4 Billion
  - 2003: cost rises to \$1.9 Billion with total completion by 2020
  - 2006: Cost is now \$3.9 Billion with East End done by 2013, and Downtown by 2019
  - 2008: Cost increases to \$4.1 Billion
  - **Summary: the cost has increased by almost 2,000 % in 15 years with no fixed deadline in sight.**
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- The cost to build the tunnel has also greatly increased just in the past 3 years:
  - 2006: \$80 Million to build tunnel
  - 2008: \$250 Million
  - 2009: \$261 Million
  - **Or, an increase of about 300% in three short years.**
  
- River Fields has been challenging the bridge process from the start:
  - 1991: Questions whether bridge is needed
  - 1992: Conducts its own study
  - 1994: Proposed Downtown bridge and Spaghetti Junction rework
  - 2000: Files lawsuit against the bridge study
  - 2009: Files lawsuit against the bridge process
  
- I have not listed any 8664.org activity since it is a relatively new effort. It gained prominence in January of 2006.

**Month-Year Activity**

- 6-1944      “Super Highways” in Louisville being planned
- 1-1948      Discussion of bridge for I-65 for downtown
- 1952        C-J Editorial: “We need bridges, not more studies”
- 1957        Two new bridges proposed (Kennedy & Minton)
- 6-1958      “North Belt Highway” proposed, with design to commence in 1975.
- 12- 1963    Both the Kennedy and Minton Bridges are completed
- 12-1987    New Bridge study proposed
- 3-1988      Ky – Ind discuss bridge in the eastern region
- 8-1989      Survey: 67% favor East End Bridge; 19% oppose
- 11-1989    Louisville Magazine explores the bridge issue
- 12-1989    Proposed East End Bridge route
- 9-1990      \$200 Million projected to build East End Bridge
- 4-1991      River Fields issues stance on bridge
- 11-1991    State advisory panel established for bridge
- 12-1991    Bridge study underway
- 12-1991    Public hearings on bridge

- 12-1991 John Yarmuth in LEO opposes East End Bridge
- 2-1992 Six sites proposed for East End Bridge
- 5-1992 Survey: East End Bridge favored 2 to 1
- 10-1992 "Goals for Greater Louisville" names bridge a top priority
- 10-1992 River Fields initiates its own study of the bridge
- 1-1993 New bridge would benefit economic development
- 2-1993 Steve Henry opposes East End Bridge
- 2-1993 Public hearings on the bridge
- 3-1993 Nick Anderson's 1<sup>st</sup> of many C-J editorial cartoons on the bridge
- 6-1993 Bridge site proposed
- 6-1993 Mayor Abramson supports downtown bridge
- 10-1993 Survey: 76% support East End Bridge; 11% oppose
- 11-1993 East End Bridge could be built by 2010 at cost of \$253 Million;  
Downtown bridge would cost \$115 Million (\$368 Million total cost)
- 1-1994 Lee Hamilton seeks \$38 Million from Congress to build bridge
- 4-1994 Louisville Magazine features bridge issues
- 4-1994 Study recommends downtown bridge
- 4-1994 Sen Wendell Ford backs downtown bridge
- 5-1994 Southern Indiana group promotes East End Bridge
- 5-1994 Sen. McConnell backs downtown bridge
- 6-1994 Jeffersonville fears impact of a downtown bridge
- 7-1994 I-265 extended toward Ohio River in southern Indiana
- 10-1994 River Fields proposes downtown bridge and Spaghetti Junction upgrade
- 2-1995 Armstrong advocates East End Bridge
- 4-1995 Indiana Senate backs East End Bridge

- 5-1995 Consultant selected to study bridge issues
- 9-1995 Abramson & Bayh agree on 2 bridges
- 12-1995 New bridge study to avoid hidden agendas
- 3-1996 Hazardous material transport a factor in bridge decision
- 4-1996 Southern Indiana favors East End Bridge
- 4-1996 Indiana to pay for new bridge study
- 5-1996 Bridge routes proposed
- 5-1996 Tolls mentioned as possible funding for new bridge
- 7-1996 Survey: 68% favor East End Bridge
- 7-1995 Anne Northup backs East End Bridge
- 8-1996 Spaghetti Junction to be rebuilt
- 8-1996 Funding of bridges questioned
- 10-1996 Prominent business leaders endorse two bridges
- 11-1996 Study recommends 2 bridges
- 11-1996 East End Bridge opposed by east end residents
- 12-1996 Prospect opposes East End Bridge
- 12-1996 Two bridges approved
- 10-1997 Gov. O'Bannon says bridges are a priority
- 12-1997 Indiana-Kentucky agree on 2 bridges to cost total of \$517 Million:
- East End Bridge to be built by 2008
  - Downtown bridge to be built by 2018
- 5-1998 Gov. Patton says bridges are a priority
- 5-1998 Congress approves \$410 Million to begin bridge design
- 11-1998 Environmental impact of bridges is started
- 4-1999 Public meetings on bridge study
- 6-1999 East End Bridges sites placed on endangered list

6-1999 Downtown Jeffersonville to be impacted by bridge

8-1999 One bridge to be built by 2014

9-1999 Hoosiers impatient with bridge delays

9-2000 River Fields sues the bridge study

11-2001 Anne Northup and Baron Hill encourage 2 new bridges

11-2001 Bridge routes evaluated

1-2002 East End Bridge may favor Indiana economic development

2-2002 Public meetings on bridge

2-2002 River Fields continues fight against East End Bridge

3-2002, Environmental impact statement is finalized at \$22.1 Million cost

3-2002 Speculative development occurring in southern Indiana bridge route

5-2002 Historic property survey conducted in bridge path

6-2002 Bridge routes favored

7-2002 Both bridges to be completed by 2010 – 2012 at \$1.4 Billion total cost

11-2002 Anne Northup says bridges are on ‘fast track’ for construction

12-2002 Bridges approval delayed

1-2003 Preservation plan for historic properties in bridge route announced

7-2003 Bridge plan to cost \$1.9 Billion and take 17 years

7-2003 Bridge consultants can build it within 17 years and less than \$1.9 Billion

9-2003 Bridges project approved by federal government

10-2003 Spaghetti Junction rework could negatively impact Waterfront Park

1-2004 Road work for East End Bridge begins

6-2004 East End Bridge opposed by national environmental group

9-2004 Bridge design prepared

2-2005 Spaghetti Junction design progresses

3-2005 Large balloons mark East End Bridge path

10-2005 Spaghetti Junction design unveiled

1-2006 8664 movement gains prominence

2-2006 Drumanard estate to be preserved by an \$80 Million tunnel

6-2006 Ground-breaking for bridges project

12-2006 Bridge designs are unveiled

12-2006 John Yarmuth advocates East End Bridge to be built first and faster

12-2006 Bridge costs soars to \$3.9 Billion with East End Bridge completed by 2013 and Downtown bridge by 2019

6-2007 Work begins on tunnel

8-2007 Abramson encourages bridge progress

10-2007 Bridge cost at \$4.1 Billion

1-2008 Bridge financing plan OK'd

2-2008 Road plan delays start of bridges to 2011

8-2008 Tunnel to cost \$250 to \$260 Million

9-2008 Delays snarl bridges plan

2-5-2009 Barge hits Minton Bridge structural support

4-2009 Kentucky inaction stalls bridge project

7-2009 Ky – Ind governors tout bridge progress

9-2009 River Fields files lawsuit

10-2009 Bridges budget misses deadline

10-2009 Bridge authority members named

11-2009 LEO Magazine does feature on River Fields

11-2009 Tunnel cost is now \$261 Million

11-2009 Discussion that ultimate bridge price tag could reach \$8 billion

## What's Next?

Hopefully, the current effort of creating the Bridge Authority will spur things along, but is a \$4.1 Billion dollar project still doable? If so, are tolls realistic to pay for it? (Note: there are currently no tolls on any other bridge along the entire length of the Ohio River).

Regardless, time is of the essence. This logistics-based community cannot continue to have its interstates clogged on a daily basis. And, if one of the existing bridges is out of service for any length of time (as almost happened to the Sherman Minton on February 5, 2009, when the barge struck its structural support), then this community will be severely compromised.

There is another way of building three (not two) new bridges within 5 years, at a cost of about \$1.4 billion dollars, and without the need for tolls to pay for it.

On the next page is my proposal entitled: "Fast, No Tolls, & Save \$1.4 Billion: The Best Way to Build the Bridges NOW!"

This proposal would:

- Expedite bridges across the Ohio River
- Greatly improve traffic circulation
- Enhance economic development
- Facilitate access to the new arena
- Facilitate access to the downtown business-hotel district, medical center, southern Indiana, western Louisville, and the new arena. and

This would be an affordable and achievable solution now. This community cannot afford further delay and cost increases of the type experienced over the past 23 years.

*Refer to Steve's Bridge & Busway Proposal on the Next Page*

# Fast, No Tolls, & Save \$2.7 Billion: The Best Way to Build the Bridges NOW!

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*The new Natcher Bridge near Owensboro is a good example of a local access bridge and it cost \$55 Million*

Bridging the Ohio River needs to happen now, at a cost of \$1.4 billion. And, pay for them without using tolls. It's as easy as 1, 2, 3. Here's how:

- 1 Don't build the tunnel. Instead use the \$261 Million estimated cost by taking 10% (\$26 M) and either:
  - Build a **duplicate** of the Drumanard Estate elsewhere
  - Or, dismantle the mansion and **relocate** it
  - The new location to become the "**Frederick Law Olmsted Interpretative Center**", with duplicative landscaping
- 2 Take the remaining tunnel amount (\$235 M) and **build two local-access bridges**: one parallel to the Clark Memorial Bridge, and the other parallel to the K & I Bridge. These local-access bridges will remove resident traffic from the Interstate bridges.
- 3 Connect these two new local-access bridges by an **upper-level 'busway'**. This busway will facilitate access for the Medical Center, Arena-Hotels-Downtown, Russell-Portland neighborhoods, New Albany, Clarksville, and Jeffersonville.

This local-access bridge-busway system can be built now and opened in near future. Also, convert one lane to 'reverse flow' on Clark Bridge. Plus, build **east-end bridge** but without the tunnel.

This reasonable approach will save \$2.7 Billion and thus minimize any need for tolls. Bridges can be affordable, greatly improve traffic, and increase economic development potential. For a logistics dependent community, metro Louisville cannot wait any longer.

**Let's build these bridges NOW!**

