

NEW SJ RIVER CROSSING

By: Jason Campbell



It's been more than a decade since the process started for acquiring the right of way and the necessary permits to build a bridge across the San Joaquin River connecting River Islands Parkway to Somerset Parkway in River Islands.

The bridge deck across the river was actually built in 2012 by Cambay Group — the developers of the 11,000-home planned River Islands community — while the connecting roads were not put in place.

And now the bridge is ready to be used making it the first new crossing of the San Joaquin River within the county in at least 90 years.

On Monday, the Lathrop City Council will consider formally accepting the bridge and the Towne Center Drive undercrossing project — collectively referred to as Bradshaw's Crossing — which will allow emergency vehicles to traverse the San Joaquin River without having to drive all the way down across the bridge at Mossdale to access Lathrop's fastest-growing residential community.

If accepted, the entire 1.2-mile section from McKee Boulevard all the way across the San Joaquin to River Islands would become the main access point for Lathrop-Manteca Fire District first responders as well as Manteca District Ambulance units and Lathrop Police Services deputies.

The new connection will knock roughly two miles off the distance that emergency vehicles must travel when responding to the area.

But the approaches to the bridge from both sides won't be open to the public until June when the Lathrop City Council accepts that portion of the project — meaning that access will be available only to first responders for more than a month.

And the process to get this point has been anything but simple.

In January of 2005 the City of Lathrop first applied to the United States Coast Guard for a bridge permit — and had to get the approval of almost a dozen other state and federal agencies to move forward with construction of the bridge. Even once all those permits had been secured, Lathrop ran into an issue when the landowner at the eastern approach didn't want to sell his property for the price that was offered to secure the right-of-way. That process ultimately ended in eminent domain proceedings four years after the initial offer was made.

River Islands fronted the entire cost of right-of-way acquisition including legal fees, staff time, consultants and even the settlement that ultimately went to the family who owned the property.

As part of the construction, a Conspan structure was also built to allow Towne Center Drive to pass beneath the eastern approach to the bridge as opposed to building a second bridge.

The entire cost of the project was picked up by River Islands and Reclamation District 2062 — a total of nearly \$10 million for all the components that were involved with constructing the bridge.

