

11th Street Bridge Plans Gets Go-Ahead

By Tim Craig

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The D.C. Council approved a plan Tuesday to accept property from the federal government so the city can begin construction of the 11th Street bridge.

The project, slated to cost \$365 million, will be the largest capital improvement project ever undertaken by the D.C. Department of Transportation, Council Chairman Vincent C. Gray (D) said today.

"This project will help the traffic nightmare that exists for people who commute every day from the east to west side of the (Anacostia) River," Gray said. "And for those who travel west to east going down the Southeast/Southwest Freeway, this will be a major step forward."

Dr. Gridlock, Washington Post reporter Robert Thomson, explained the project in a recent column this way: "Drivers heading southbound on the Anacostia Freeway don't have a direct link to the bridges, which connect with the Southeast-Southwest Freeway. A direct link would ease travel to downtown Washington, Georgetown and Northern Virginia. ... The new bridges will connect the two freeways. They also will connect local traffic to the Navy Yard, the Marine Corps Barracks, Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, Anacostia Park, and Historic Anacostia."

But environmentalists remain concerned about the effects on Anacostia Park. Under the resolution taken up by the council today, the National Park Service is transferring the parcel at the park to the city for construction, but the federal government will maintain ownership.

One opponent, Christopher Herman of Southeast Washington, said the bridge will worsen traffic in Anacostia. "The project relocates existing PM rush hour freeway bottlenecks and congestion from the west side to the east side of the river," Herman testified.

He also said the new bridge's \$365 million price tag will "preclude or postpone" other, more important, highway projects.

Construction on the project begins next month.