



2019 AAPA EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS  
Classification 15: Websites

**Gerald Desmond Bridge Website**  
[www.newgdbridge.com](http://www.newgdbridge.com)

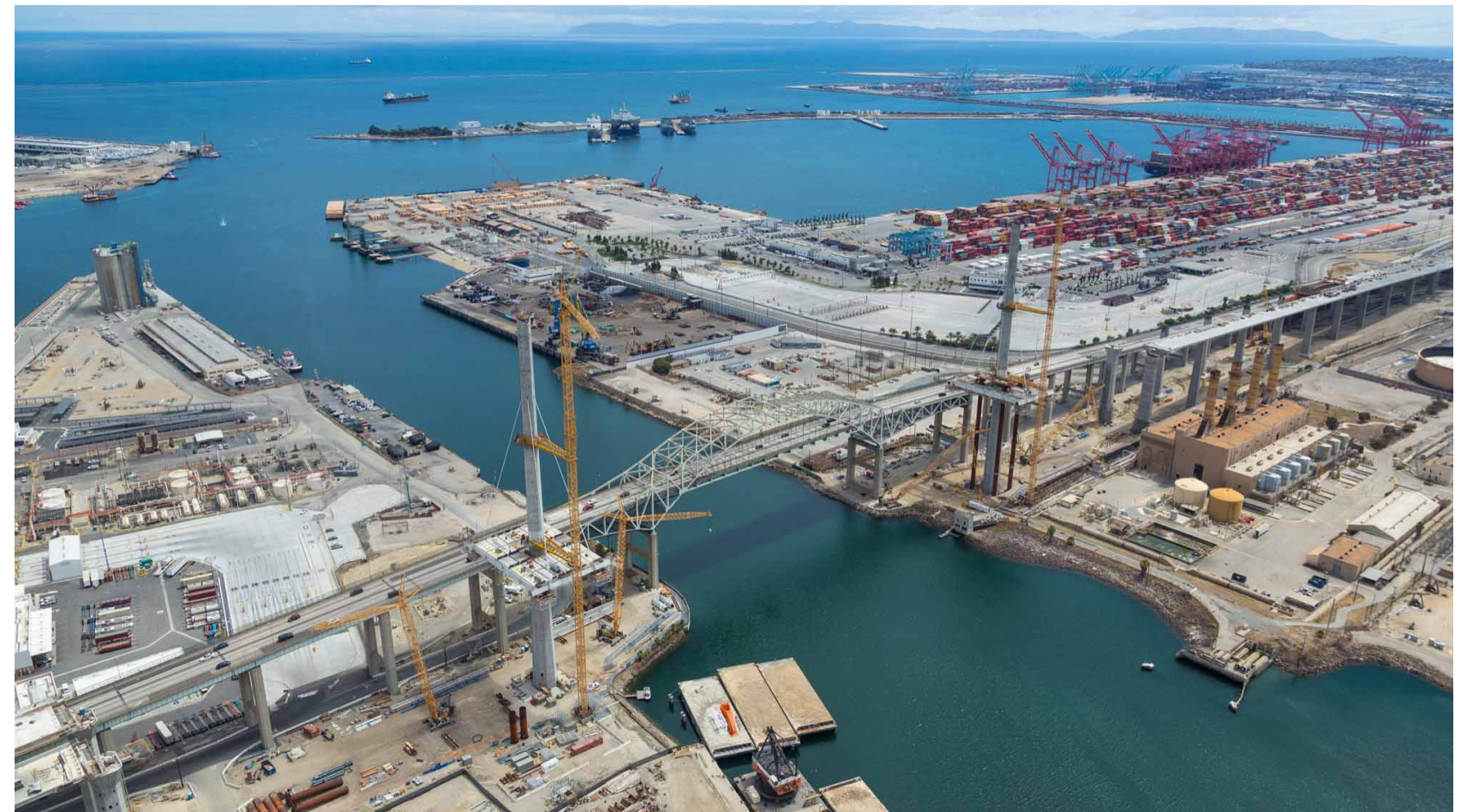


# Gerald Desmond Bridge Website

[www.newgdbridge.com](http://www.newgdbridge.com)

## Summary:

The \$1.5 billion Gerald Desmond Bridge Replacement Project is the centerpiece of the \$4 billion capital improvement program at the Port of Long Beach – the largest capital investment of any U.S. seaport. The bridge connects several terminals in the San Pedro Bay ports complex with the 710 Freeway, a major cargo corridor. About 15 percent of all containerized cargo coming into the U.S. travels over the Gerald Desmond, which opened in 1968 and was not designed to handle today's jumbo-size cargo ships or current and future traffic levels. Informing Port stakeholders about bridge progress and construction impacts is critical, but the project website had become outdated. A new design, launched in March 2018, meets modern-day communications challenges and was completed in just 10 weeks and well within its \$5,000 budget.



Gerald Desmond Bridge Replacement Project

# 7 Communication Challenges and Opportunities

The Port of Long Beach is one of the world's premier seaports, a gateway for trans-Pacific trade and a trailblazer in innovative goods movement, safety and environmental stewardship. Founded in 1911, the Port is a major economic engine for the region and handles trade valued at \$200 billion annually while also supporting one in every five Long Beach jobs, 575,000 Southern California jobs, and 2.6 million jobs across the nation. In 2018, the port handled 8.1 million container units, the best year in its history.

As the industry navigates the "Big Ship Era," the Port of Long Beach is one of the few U.S. ports that can welcome today's largest vessels, which are newer, cleaner and more efficient. The Port serves 175 shipping lines with connections to 217 seaports around the world, offering a wealth of opportunity for U.S. businesses. Goods moving through the Port reach every U.S. congressional district. The Port encompasses 3,200 acres with 31 miles of waterfront, 10 piers, 80 berths and 66 post-Panamax gantry cranes.

Led by the five-member Board of Harbor Commissioners and Executive Director Mario Cordero, the Port is on track for a green future, completing the most aggressive capital improvement program in the nation and creating the world's most modern, efficient and sustainable seaport. In 2018, the Port was named the "Best Green Seaport" in the world, thanks to its record of environmental stewardship, achieving dramatic improvements in air, water and sediment quality in the Port. The Port is pursuing a zero-emissions future, nurturing a host of clean technology demonstrations throughout the Port that will help the industry reduce environmental impacts to unprecedented levels.

More than 40 percent of seaborne cargo entering the United States comes in through the San Pedro Bay ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach – the nation's busiest and second-busiest seaports. The Port of Long Beach committed \$4 billion this decade to capital improvements – the most of any U.S. seaport – including terminal, railroad, roadway and bridge improvements to support trade and jobs growth.



The Port of Long Beach

A centerpiece of the \$4 billion capital improvement program is the replacement of the Gerald Desmond Bridge, which connects several terminals in the ports complex with the 710 Freeway, a major cargo corridor. About 15 percent of all containerized cargo coming into the U.S. travels over the Gerald Desmond, which opened in 1968 and was not designed to handle today's jumbo-size cargo ships or current and future traffic levels.

To better meet today's growing traffic volumes, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Port of Long Beach began the Gerald Desmond Bridge Replacement Project in 2013. The project also receives funding contributions from the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro).

With a budget of \$1.5 billion, the new bridge is being built with a cable-stayed design that lowers budget, resources, and construction time versus traditional suspension bridges. With 205 feet of clearance above the water, the bridge will have the highest water clearance of any cable-stayed

bridge in the U.S. and be high enough to accommodate bigger, more efficient cargo ships. Bike and pedestrian lanes with observation points are also built into the new bridge design. It will be among the largest in the nation and an iconic landmark for Southern California.

Bridge construction provided an immediate and significant economic boost to Long Beach and the region. To date, the spending for the project has generated economic activity of more than \$2 billion in Southern California. On average, construction supports 3,000 jobs each year.

The communications challenges?

As the Bridge Project nears completion (planned for 2020), the top priorities of the communications program for the project shifted in 2017 from addressing traffic impacts (e.g. road closures, construction delays and congestion) to marketing the significance of and key storylines surrounding the vital role the new bridge will play in goods movement for the local, regional and national economy.



Gerald Desmond Bridge Replacement Project

## 2 Complementing the Overall Mission

And, although a project website was in place (a first place 2014 AAPA Excellence in Communications Award recipient), like all things in this fast-moving communication age, it had become obsolete. It did not allow for ever-increasing content updates, customization, or responsive design without the involvement of the Port's webmaster, the sole gatekeeper for the site's template-based platform.

Under the direction of the Port of Long Beach Communications and Community Relations team, Westbound Communications has, since 2013, served as the public relations and marketing contractor on the Gerald Desmond Bridge Replacement Project team. Although responsible for website content, they were unable to easily update the old website themselves. Additionally, audiences were unable to easily view the old site on their mobile devices, making it increasingly difficult to keep stakeholders (local residents, regional

commuters, Port-related businesses, international shipping companies, importers and exporters, government agencies and more) properly informed or digitally engaged.

Heightening the need for a new site was an anticipated rebranding effort for the Bridge Project when it is named (slated for 2019). This meant the new website had to support the accompanying visual identity of the new brand and large amount of visual assets, including a more than seven-year archive of video, photos, podcasts, infographics and other collateral content.

Budget was another tough challenge. Given constrictive budgets that sometimes accompany infrastructure projects, this redesigned, newly coded, asset-rich site had to be created for less than \$5,000, which automatically eliminated many website development firms.

One of the strategic goals of an updated Strategic Plan, released by the Port of Long Beach in April 2019, is to develop and maintain state-of-the-art infrastructure that enhances productivity and efficiency in goods movement. The Gerald Desmond Bridge Replacement Project is clearly a major element in meeting that goal.

The Port has a long-entrenched commitment to keeping their stakeholders in the loop through a wide variety of effective communications, and the challenges of a multi-year construction project with long-term road closures and congestion require clear communication. The new bridge website, [newgdbridge.com](http://newgdbridge.com), is part of an integrated communications and outreach program to keep stakeholders in and around the Port of Long Beach informed about the bridge replacement project and traffic impacts.

The website is, in essence, the anchor for the project's outreach campaign where stakeholders can access news, photos, videos, live cameras, construction updates, traffic information, submit a request for a guest speaker or presentation, and connect with the project by signing up for weekly updates via email, download the "LB Bridge" mobile app, link to social media channels, and much more.

# 3 Planning and Programming Components

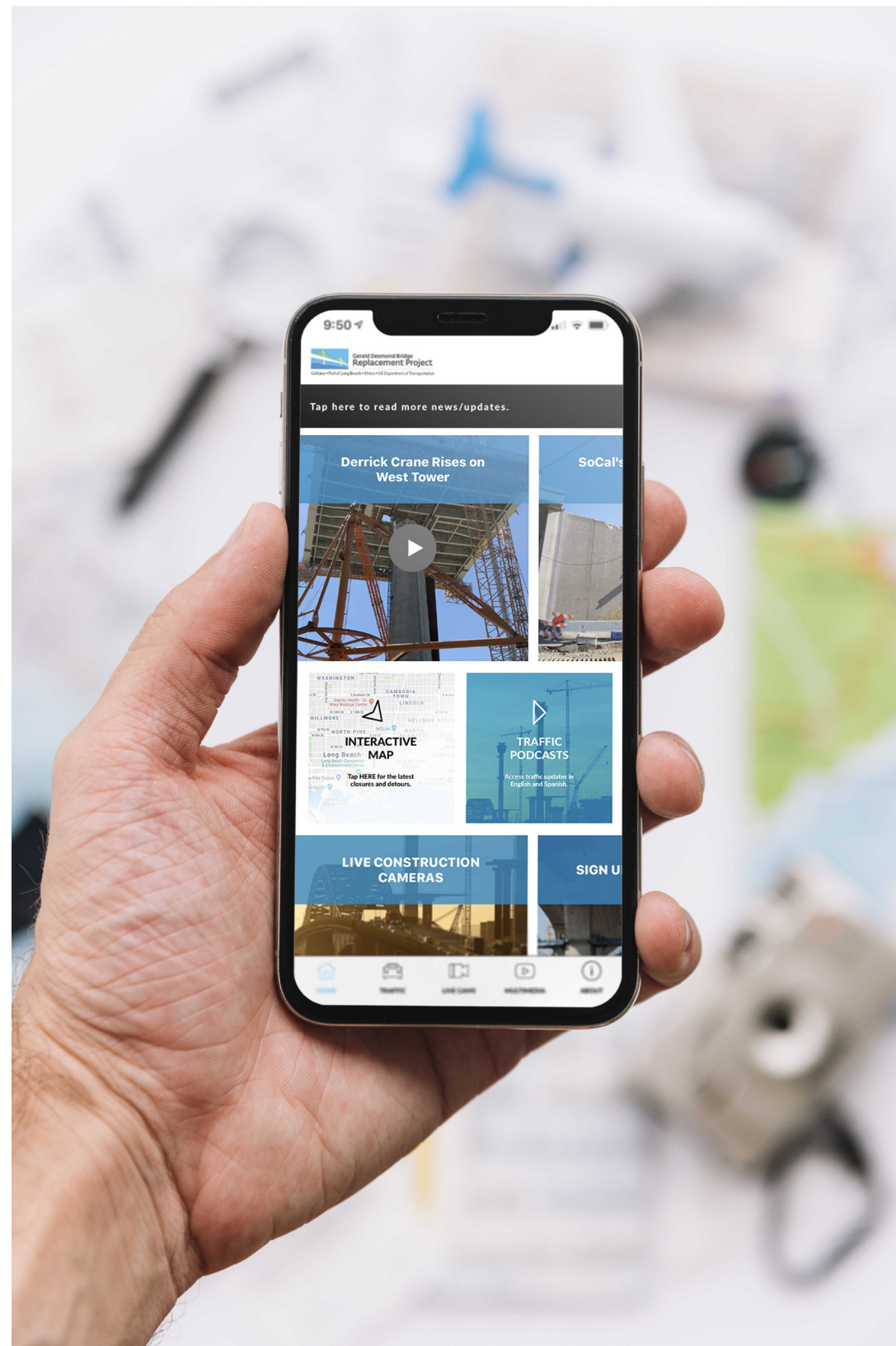
Working with Port of Long Beach Communications and Community Relations team, Westbound Communications took on the challenge of creating the new website.

To transform the outdated website to an engaging, user-friendly and inviting digital hub, and build excitement within Southern California for the new bridge, Westbound researched best practices from other bridge and infrastructure project websites, including the New NY Bridge, Corpus Christi Bridge, MyFigueroa, and the Los Angeles Coliseum. From this audit, they learned the following: each offered deep repositories of photos and videos, requiring a robust and easily searchable gallery application; quick access to sign-ups to all communications channels on the home page; graphical treatment of the brand when balancing the old project name with the new name (NewNYBridge Project became the Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge); and constant updates to project photography featured throughout the site.

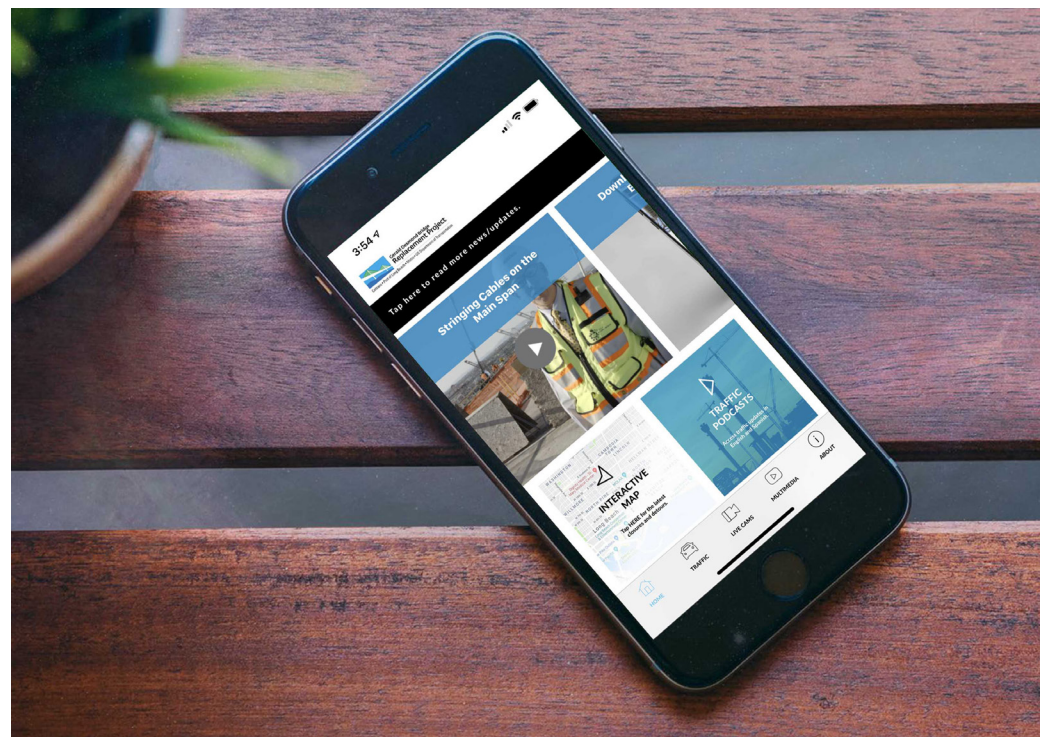
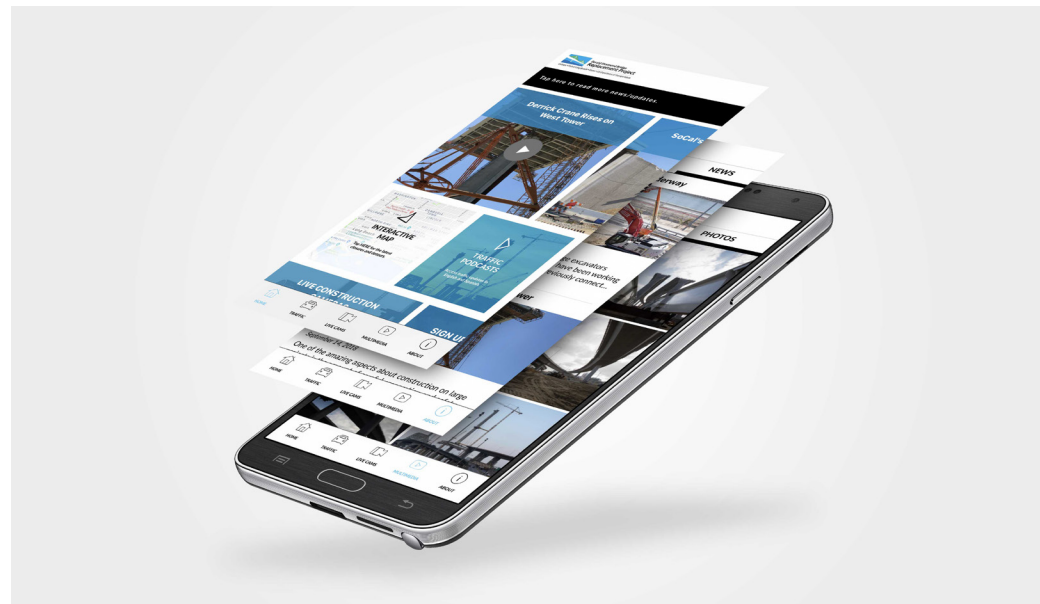
Once the external review was completed, they conducted an internal analysis, examining current website traffic and comparing it with qualitative feedback from the larger Bridge Project team and community members to determine the most important features and most frequently visited pages to create optimal paths for visitors through the new website.

For example, the site's mobile-user penetration was only 28 percent. With 50+ percent being an industry "norm," that confirmed the need for a mobile-friendly, responsive design and made the additional investment necessary in the development of the site. Another example, news updates and important announcements only received 3.4 percent of page views, meaning they went largely unnoticed. That shortcoming had to be fixed immediately. This research and analysis informed the strategy and objectives for the development of the website.

Mobile app



Mobile app



The team wanted to create and implement a website to serve as the cornerstone for all digital outreach, informing stakeholders of the project's status, benefits and impacts, and communicating its key messages and announcements. It also needed to be clean, simple and easily transferred to future branding decisions. The structure and homepage of the website were outlined to align with its most popular features (live cameras, announcements, tour and presentation requests, Weekly Construction Update sign-up, photo/video gallery) and integrate all other outreach platforms (e-mail marketing, our app, social media channels, Google Maps project area, etc.) to maximize reach and streamline the process of updating information.

Integration of various marketing channels and content re-use across them was the first major step toward improved user experience on the newly designed website. Then, the website team carefully worked to weave in new visuals and refined messaging that would underscore the project as a new icon for Southern California, from there, building out the balance of the

website relaunch. Specific objectives included:

- Growing monthly website users, visits and page views by 50 percent by June 2018;
- Increasing mobile usage by 20 percent based on prior metrics;
- Increasing volume of digital assets in photo and video gallery by 200 percent;
- Enabling blog-like entries of real-time news, events, traffic impacts, with a goal of increasing updates to the site by 20 percent.

To accomplish these objectives, a reliable content management system was required that would enable creating, editing, and publishing content without the aid of a website developer. The platform needed intuitive, modern navigation options; mobile friendly responsive design; flexible/scalable code; downloadable and searchable assets (photos, videos, detour fact sheets, etc.); and more – all within a \$5,000 budget.

What seemed impossible happened! The contractor was determined to find

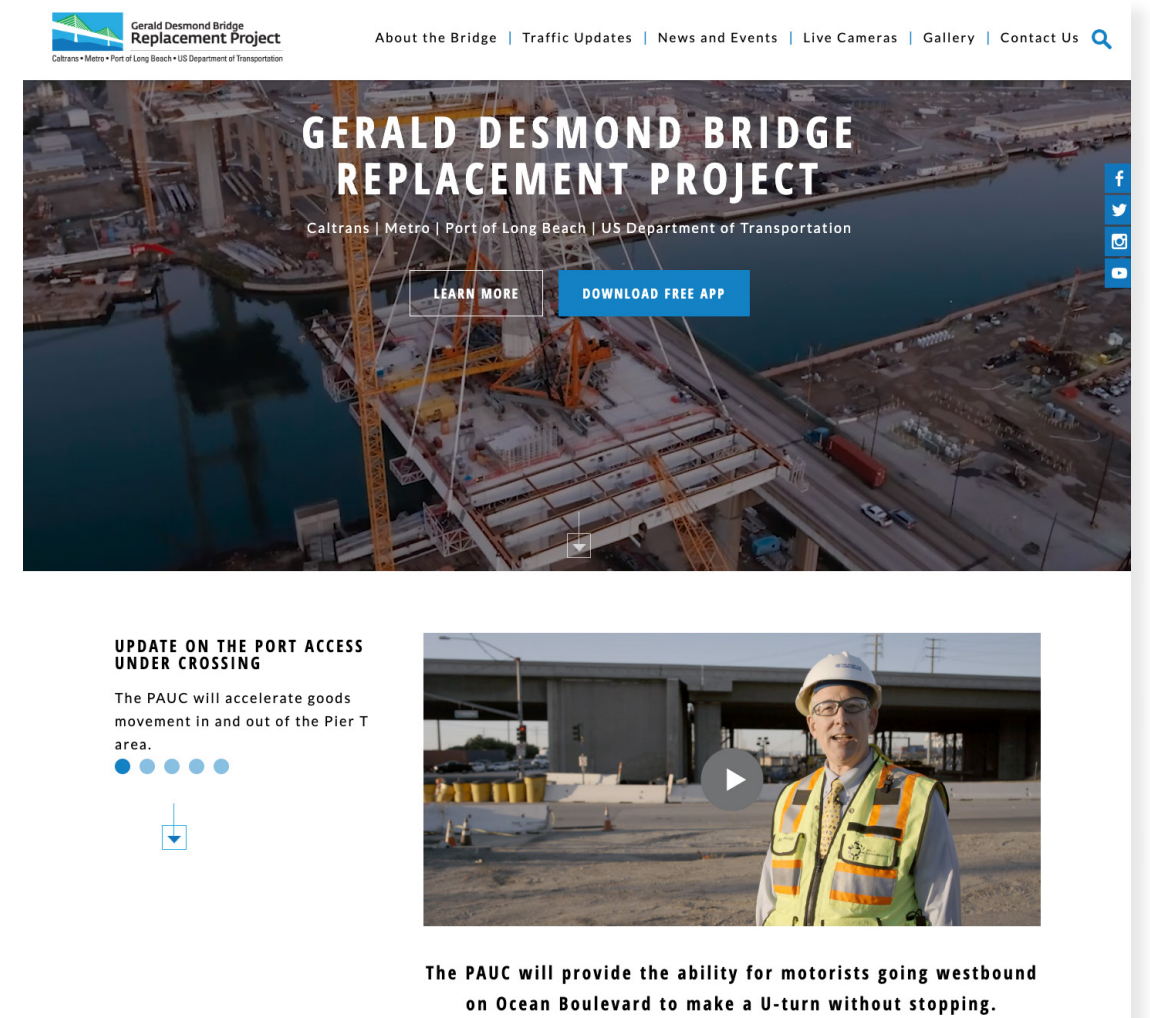
a way to get a new site done with these new parameters. After a significant amount of research into different website development options, an approach was selected using the open-source WordPress platform and a “solopreneur” vendor – Design on Target – that would deliver our desired design and features within 10 weeks and within the outlined budget.

The target audience for the website is international and virtually limitless, but primary targets include:

- Members of the Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners;
- Area residents;
- Local property owners;
- Commuters;
- Motorists in the general project vicinity;
- Commercial vehicle operators;
- Port employees, clients and consultants;
- Local, regional and state government agencies;
- Downtown Long Beach business organizations;

- Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce;
- City, county and state elected and appointed officials;
- School districts;
- School district transportation agencies/charter companies;
- Local business owners, employees and customers;
- Neighborhood, community and business associations;
- News media, including the Long Beach Press-Telegram, Long Beach Business Journal, the Gazettes, Los Angeles Times, Daily Breeze, Journal of Commerce, Los Angeles Business Journal, Long Beach Post and student newspapers, broadcast media, trade publications, and national media as pertinent;
- Emergency response organizations, including the U.S. Coast Guard and local police and fire agencies;
- Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department;
- Major utility companies and related businesses;
- Railroads and related businesses;

- The Aquarium of the Pacific, Queen Mary and other local tourist destinations and hospitality organizations, including the Long Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau;
- Local delivery and courier services;
- Water management organizations, environmental permitting agencies and other local service districts;
- Environmental activists;
- ILWU leadership and membership;
- Trade unions, IBEW, Pile Drivers union, LA-OC Building Trade Council;
- National and international bridge enthusiast groups.



Home page of the Gerald Desmond Bridge Replacement Project website



**Gerald Desmond Bridge Replacement Project**  
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About the Bridge | Traffic Updates | News and Events | Live Cameras | Gallery | Contact Us

### NEWS AND EVENTS

For all of the recent Bridge Project news and events

[Downtown Connector Ramps Take Form](#)  
April 19, 2019

[Grand Prix Comes to Long Beach this Week ...](#)  
April 11, 2019

[Behind the Scenes on a Bridge Tour](#)  
April 4, 2019

[PULSE of the PORTS Highlights Cargo Move ...](#)  
March 29, 2019

[READ MORE NEWS](#)

### INTERACTIVE MAP

Click [here](#) for the latest closures and detours.

Map data ©2019 Google. Terms. 2,000 ft

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### GET THE LB BRIDGE APP

Through our free mobile app you can get up-to-the-minute road conditions, photos, videos, access to live cameras, and traffic alerts available as push notifications and in English and Spanish audio.

Available on the [App Store](#) | [Google Play](#)

[LEARN MORE](#)

[@newgdbridge](#)

**Gerald Desmond Bridge Replacement Project** @newgdbridge • 24 Apr  
The scale of the new bridge is clear in this dramatic shot from Instagram user [t\\_cha\\_engineer](#). #FanPhotoFeature

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# 4 Actions Taken and Communication Outputs Used

The team approached the development of the new website using a standard four-phase process – but compressed what is typically a 16- to 20-week process into just 10 weeks. The scope of work included the following phases:

1. **Scoping** – Westbound working closely with the Port of Long Beach Communications Division to clearly understand the target audiences, objectives, and functions of the desired site. From this input, crafting a site map to guide the design and development.
2. **Website Design** – Once the site map and scope were confirmed, conducting a storyboarding session to establish design direction. The contractor then provided three design composites of the home page and an interior page. Based on the Port’s feedback on the three composites, final comps of the home page and interior page were delivered for final review and approval, then ultimately implemented with the website development firm.

3. **Content Generation** – Using the site map as an outline, generated content was generated for each of the 30+ pages on the site, working with the Port and engineering firm building the new bridge to populate certain dynamic pages. These include an At A Glance interactive graphic of a rendering of the new bridge to highlight its many features and a customized project area within Google Maps with clickable traffic impacts to find out more information on each one. The team then worked through the review and approval process to finalize content, including unique photos selected specifically for each page of the site, and more than a dozen new videos (drone, time-lapse, and more).
4. **Website Development** – Once the design and content were finalized, Westbound project-managed the coding of the staged website for a responsive experience, ensuring users could easily access all the great content and features, whether they were on a desktop, mobile device or

tablet. Development also included a substantial CMS back-end to enable Westbound to update and maintain the website on a consistent, real-time basis.

Once development of the staged site neared completion, rigorous quality-assurance testing was performed to detect and eliminate bugs, content errors, bad links, etc. In parallel with this effort, the team was trained in managing and updating the CMS, as well as receiving minor lessons in baseline coding to fix “simple” problems. This training revealed some areas for fine-tuning (e.g., an additional back-end form system in the CMS that enabled editing of every single text and graphic element on the custom-coded home page), which was implemented before going live. At last, Westbound presented the final version of the staged site to the Port, received a swift approval, then prepared it for launch.

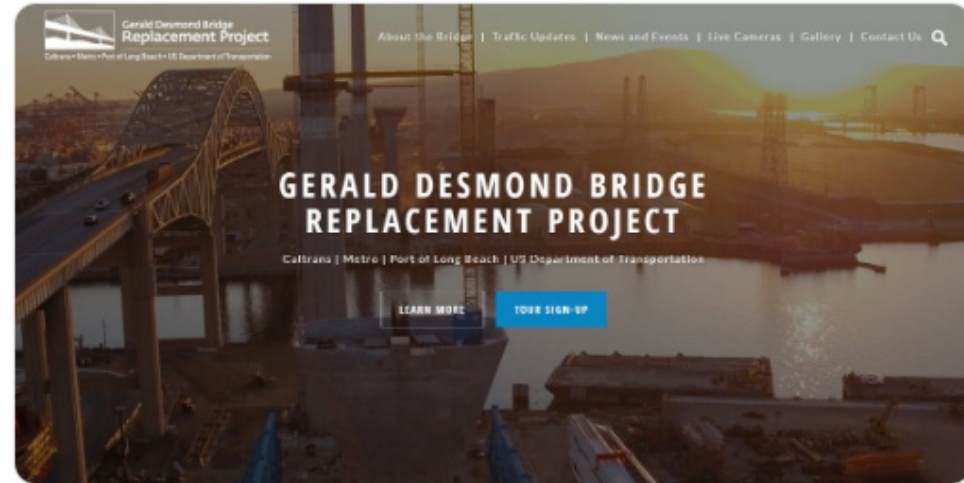
To launch the website, a prominent display was featured at a large local event in March 2018, selected to capitalize on key target audience attendance – the Port of Long Beach’s

annual “Pulse of the Ports Peak Season Forecast,” which usually draws a crowd of more than 500 of the most involved industry leaders, community members and elected officials.

In this first day alone, visitors to the website increased by 13.6 percent.

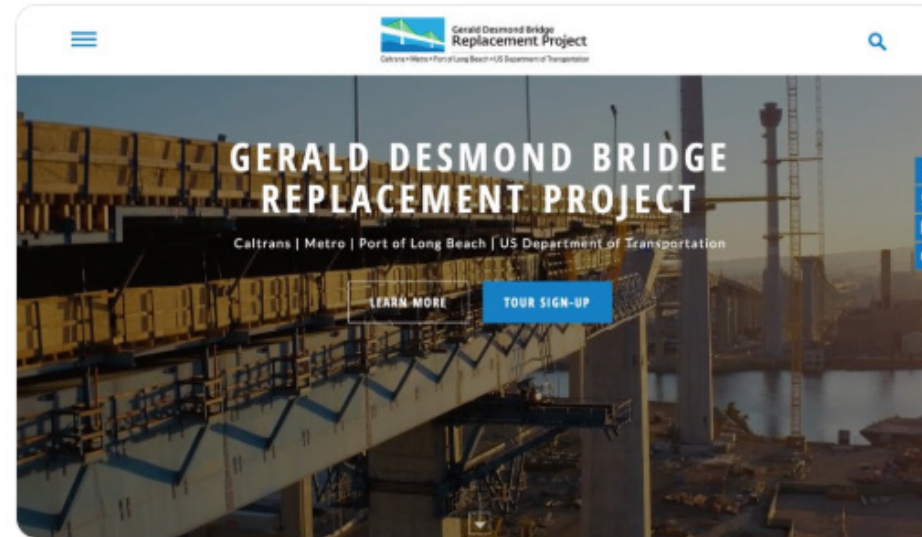
Social media posts promoting the website and app

**Gerald Desmond Bridge Replacement Project** @newgd... · 14 May 2018  
Have you seen our new website? It's got a fresh, updated look, with all the features you have grown to love (live construction cameras, weekly traffic podcasts, and the latest news, photos and videos from the Project) even more easily accessible: [newgdbridge.com](http://newgdbridge.com)



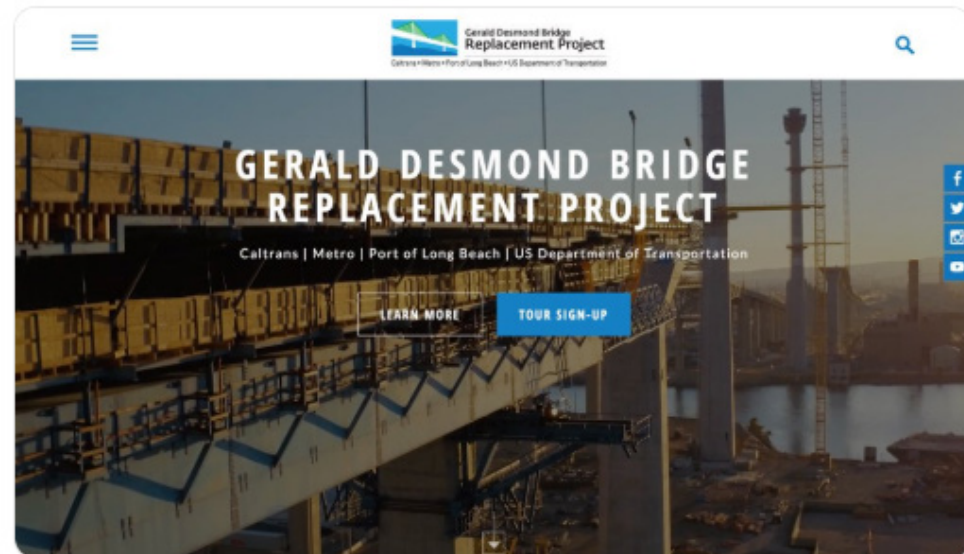
1 retweet, 8 likes

**Port of Long Beach** @portoflongbeach · 3 May 2018  
Have you visited the newly revamped and refreshed @newgdbridge website yet? Find bridge construction and traffic info updates, livestream construction cameras and more! [newgdbridge.com](http://newgdbridge.com)

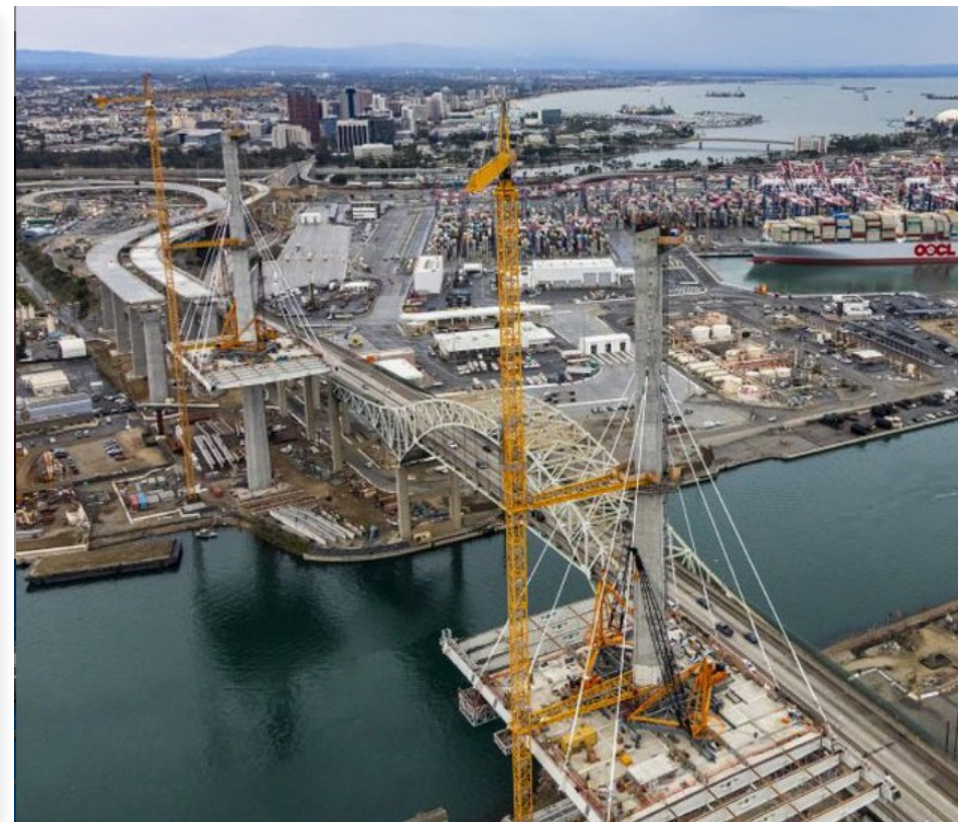


1 retweet, 2 likes

**Port of Long Beach** @portoflongbeach · 24 Apr 2018  
Updated and refreshed! The @newgdbridge's new website has officially launched and it looks beautiful! Find bridge news and updates, photos, videos and construction webcams. [newgdbridge.com](http://newgdbridge.com)



3 retweets, 5 likes



portoflongbeach

portoflongbeach Have you checked out the @newgdbridge's LB Bridge App update? Find photos, construction and traffic updates, live cameras and more! Find it in the App Store.

5w  
frankfries 🍷🔥  
5w Reply  
doralicious7 🙏

Liked by newgdbridge and 321 others

MARCH 6

Add a comment... Post

## 5 Communications Outcomes and Evaluation Methods

The launch of the new website has succeeded beyond expectations. Through Google Analytics and a comprehensive input session with the larger Bridge team post-launch, results were as follows:

- Increased monthly website users by 225 percent, visits by 148 percent and page views 119 percent by June 2018;
- Doubled mobile usage (from 28 percent to 60 percent) by June 2018;
- Increased volume of digital assets by over 300 percent (approx. 300 assets - 1,000 assets);
- Before the redesign, there were an average of 5 updates per month that, with new design, now averages 21.3 new stories per month, approaching near-daily updates.

The contractor, working with the Port team, completed the development and launch of the website within the prescribed 10-week period and within the \$5,000 budget at \$4,500.

The website has been very successful serving as home base for Bridge Project information, with consistent and engaging messaging that links back and

forth with social media, weekly updates, e-blasts, a new mobile app, media outreach, and all collateral. In fact, the Bridge Project Communications Team has realized tremendous time savings because updating the website automatically updates our mobile app within minutes.

With the new CMS-driven website, the team has maintained a consistent flow of announcements, alerts, construction photos, video updates, weekly English and Spanish traffic update podcasts, and much more across all communications channels, ensuring easy access to all news, information, and rich media for our stakeholder, media, and general public audiences.

*"As we approach the completion of the spectacular new bridge replacing the Gerald Desmond Bridge, it's more important than ever to have an up-to-date website as the anchor for the project's outreach campaign. Working through this department, the Port's contractor, Westbound Communications, did a great job identifying needed improvements, making it easy for staff to add regular updates and for our stakeholders to access news, photos, videos, live camera feeds, construction updates, traffic information, and so much more."*

*-Kerry Gerot, Port of Long Beach  
Director of Communications and Community Relations*

*"Perhaps more rewarding than hitting our metrics were the scores of individuals – from executives at Port events to community members on tours – who specifically complimented the high-quality user experience and new features included on the website. The digital analytics prove that our ability to consistently publish fresh, original content will continue to captivate our audience and ensure important updates are received – but we also believe it will deliver invaluable, long-term digital marketing momentum as we get closer to completion, enabling us to strategically tell the larger Bridge Project story and reinforce its brand both now and after construction is complete."*

*- Daniel Rhodes,  
Senior Vice President, Westbound Communications Inc.*

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