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Omega Morgan Moves Large Oregon Bridge to New Location



As part of a bridge replacement project, moving, rigging and transport specialist Omega Morgan actually slid a road bridge to a new position across the Willamette River in what it claims as one of longest bridge moves ever attempted. On January 19, Omega Morgan successfully shifted the 87-year-old Sellwood Bridge in one piece and on a radius to the north to provide a temporary route while a new \$307-million bridge is built in the original location.

The Sellwood Bridge, at 1,972 feet long, 75 feet high and, 28 feet wide, is one of the state of Oregon's busiest bridges, carrying some 30,000 vehicles a day. The bridge links SW Portland to its SE business district and suburbs.

"We are really pleased to be involved in this important, complex and exciting project," said John McCalla, CEO/president of Omega Morgan, one of the West Coast's leading moving, rigging and transportation companies.

Both Omega Morgan and general contractors Slayden/Sundt Joint Venture have successfully used this detour bridge method for other projects. "Omega Morgan has moved bridges weighing upwards of eight million pounds, but this one does offer some additional challenges," McCalla said.

The company's chief engineer, Ralph DiCaprio, said the company welcomes the challenges. "This is why we like what we do. There's something different on every project," he said.

Devising a strategy to move the bridge in one piece helped Omega Morgan win the contract after showing that it would save time, money and duplication of efforts, according to parties involved in the project. Other proposals had suggested expensive and redundant structural features and extensive staging.

The plan is to use hydraulic jacks to lift the bridge onto skid gear and then to move and mount it on new piers that have been built in the river. The aging bridge will then become the "shoofly" or detour while construction begins on the new bridge. Officials on the project said the temporary bridge will be inspected before it is open to traffic.

The 87-year-old bridge replaced a ferry called the John F. Caples, a steam-powered vessel that took 582 vehicles and 452 pedestrians across the Willamette River each day. It was Portland's first fixed-span bridge, meaning that it did not have a draw or swing span.

The decision was made to replace the Sellwood Bridge because it cannot handle the current volume of traffic, has a low rating on a federal bridge rating, and buses and heavy trucks are restricted from using the bridge. It also has narrow lanes and sidewalk, no bike facilities and it is not designed to withstand earthquakes even though the area is in one of the most dangerous earthquake zones in the U.S.



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Omega Morgan provides innovative solutions for the complex lifting, moving, rigging and transportation challenges faced by manufacturers, power generation companies, general contractors and logistics providers. For more information visit www.omegamorgan.com.