

# DEH CHO BRIDGE TIMELINE

## 1958

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Government of Canada commissioned a consultant's report that estimated the cost of building a bridge across the Mackenzie River at \$6.2 million, an amount that was considered too expensive. Ferry operations at Fort Providence begin.

## 1968

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Highway to Yellowknife completed. Traffic crosses the Mackenzie River by ferry in the summer and by ice bridge in the winter and spring. This historically meant interruptions in service of an average of five weeks in the spring and several weeks at the end of ferry season, depending on when the ice crossing was in place.

(Photo taken in 1967 by Ted Grant copyright Government of Northwest Territories, courtesy Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre).



## 1975

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A Public Works conceptual design estimates the cost of the construction of a bridge across the Mackenzie River near Fort Providence at between \$25 and \$30 million.

From 1975 – 2000, the Bridge was identified as a priority, but never included in the Capital Plan.

## 1987

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Merv Hardie Ferry begins operating into December and January through a channel cut in ice, extending service at the end of the ferry season.

(Photo taken by Judy McLinton copyright Government of Northwest Territories, courtesy Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre)

## 2000

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Initial proposal by the Fort Providence Combined Council Alliance.

## 2002

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- February The Fort Providence Combined Council Alliance presented the Deh Cho Bridge Fort Providence, NWT Feasibility Study to the GNWT. The Alliance is comprised of leaders of the Fort Providence Dene, Metis, and Hamlet Councils. The study proposed a Public Private Partnership whereby the Alliance would be responsible for raising sufficient equity and debt financing to design, finance, build, and maintain the Bridge to agreed standards for a 35 year concession period. The Study proposed that the GNWT would contribute financially to the project from its savings from no longer having to maintain a ferry and ice bridge at the Fort Providence crossings. It also proposed a toll on commercial vehicles. The Deh Cho Bridge Corporation (DCBC) was incorporated.
- March NTCL objects to navigational clearance
- May 23 The Deh Cho Bridge is included in the Corridors for Canada proposal for funding under the federal Strategic Infrastructure Fund.
- November 15 GNWT signs a Memorandum of Intent with the Fort Providence Combined Council Alliance committing the parties to work toward a Public Private Partnership for the construction of a bridge spanning the Mackenzie River. (The Memorandum can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/dehcho8>.) Andrew Gamble and Associates is hired by the Alliance to undertake a feasibility study. Both the federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the GNWT Department of Transportation committed additional funding to the Alliance to further the development of the project.

## 2003

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Members of the Legislative Assembly conducted public hearings in Fort Providence, Behchoko, and Yellowknife on the proposed construction of the Deh Cho Bridge. Broad public support was expressed by participants in the public hearings.

- January Agreement with NTCL for increased navigational clearance
- February Nichols report on Aboriginal Benefits of the Deh Cho Bridge Project submitted. (The report is available at <http://tinyurl/dehcho7>)

- March The Deh Cho Bridge Act was introduced in the Legislative Assembly. Minister of Transportation Joseph Handley says “This is a necessary preparatory step in the process leading to construction of the bridge.”
- May Bridge redesign
- June The *Deh Cho Bridge Act* passed third reading in the Legislative Assembly. The Act authorizes the Minister of Transportation to enter into agreements with a concessionaire to finance, operate, and maintain the Deh Cho Bridge and to prescribe and administer the collection of tolls from vehicles travelling over the bridge.
- October 21 Concession Agreement initialled. The Agreement provided the framework of the arrangement between GNWT and the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation, and it satisfied the parameters and conditions set out in the Memorandum of Intent.

## 2004

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The Deh Cho Bridge proposal continued to move forward, with a focus on the environmental assessment and regulatory process.

- January Project referred to Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (MVEIRB)
- June 10 Presentation on the proposed Deh Cho Bridge to MVEIRB is made by the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation (DCBC). (A copy of the presentation can be found at <http://tinyurl/dehcho4>.)
- October 21 DM Russell Neudorf of the Department of Transportation, speaking on behalf of the Government of Northwest Territories, made a presentation on the proposed bridge at a Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board public hearing in Fort Providence. Stated that the GNWT is a partner with DCBC to build a bridge across the Mackenzie River. The hearing also heard from Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs, GNWT Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, and the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation.
- December 10 The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board submitted its Report of Environmental Assessment on the Deh Cho Bridge to the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. The Report found no significant environmental issues related to the construction and operation of the Deh Cho Bridge.
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## 2005

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TD Securities agree to act as the financial broker

- March 15 Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs accepts the Report of Environmental Assessment for the Deh Cho Bridge.
- May 9 Community planning meeting held in Fort Providence to plan for the opportunities arising from the construction of the Deh Cho Bridge through the Community Benefits Plan.
- July 13 The Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board granted the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation a water licence and land use permit for the construction of the Deh Cho Bridge
- October Project tendered, with one bidder. Bid rejected due to price
- November Navigational Waters Protection Act approval issued

## 2006

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- February Project re-tendered. Price beyond pre-determined financial limits. Project shelved
- July 2006 PROLOG updates Commercial Vehicle Traffic Forecast (available at <http://tinyurl/dehcho5>)

## 2007

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Market conditions drive the estimated cost of the project to the point where it is no longer self-financing. The GNWT requests a \$50 million contribution from the federal government to make the project viable, which is rejected. An earlier federal commitment to provide equity totalling \$3 million remains in place. (This amount was later reduced to \$1.8 million.)

- March 2007 The GNWT decides to move forward on the project by making a commitment to provide a \$2 million annual subsidy throughout the Concession period.
- July 2007 Atcon Construction submits a guaranteed maximum price tender
- August 24, 2007 Community celebration to mark the official start of the Deh Cho Bridge construction project through the signing of the "*Limited Approval to Proceed*"

between the GNWT and the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation.

September 28, 2007 Concession Agreement signed between the GNWT and the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation. (The Agreement can be found on the DOT website at <http://tinyurl.com/dehcho2>.) The Agreement grants a concession and lease to DCBC, and spells out the terms and conditions of the project including the development, design, construction, financing, operation, managing, maintenance, and rehabilitation of the Bridge.

Financing secured through TD Securities

October 13 Navigational Water Protection office advises formally of new concerns. They instruct re-advertising of project

November Navigational Waters Protection Act approval re-issued

December Updated Cost-Benefit Analysis supplied by Nichols Applied Management. (The Analysis can be found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/dehcho6>)

## 2008

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Site work begins. Lending agreements close in February.

Deh Cho Bridge Corporation signs a contract with Atcon Construction to serve as the primary contractor on the Deh Cho Bridge Project.



Construction work on the south pier bents and abutment begins, but the work gets behind schedule.

(Work on abutments, June 16, 2008. Copyright Government of the Northwest Territories.)

GNWT puts in place the final parts of its due diligence team:

- KPMG for negotiation expertise and financial modeling;
- Goodmans LLP for legal advice primarily for the Concession Agreement;
- BP-TEC and TYLin for engineering expertise and design review;
- Prolog Canada for traffic forecasting;
- IBI Group for tolling solutions; and,
- Nichols Applied Management for economic analysis.

An independent detailed design review was undertaken by the GNWT to ensure the bridge design met required national standards. Modifications were required to the pier bents and to the superstructure and deck design. The modifications to the pier bents were completed by September of 2008. The revised superstructure and deck design is expected to be completed by December 2009.

## 2009

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Work is completed on the 2008 construction season and the temporary work bridge is removed prior to river ice break-up.

May            Infinity Engineering completed an assessment of the findings of TY Lin, the Independent Review Engineer for the project, on the stay assisted superstructure of the bridge. Infinity begins a detailed design of the superstructure components.

June            A dispute between Atcon Construction and its sub-contractor Ruskin Construction caused a stoppage of site work by Ruskin at the start of the 2009 construction season. When the dispute threatened the entire construction season, DCBC (with GNWT approval) stepped into the dispute to remove the 2009 foundation site works from Atcon, leaving it with responsibility for the the supply of steel pier armour, pier bents, and camp services.

July 24        DCBC signed a contract with Ruskin to complete the North piers and abutments

(Photo taken October 5, 2009. Copyright Government of the Northwest Territories.)



December    Negotiations between DCBC and Atcon to build the remainder of the Bridge using the new design prove unsuccessful, and Atcon is removed from the project.

## 2010

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January      Infinity completes the final bridge design, which receives GNWT approval.

February    Negotiation of revised cost and schedule for superstructure and deck and revised construction contract. Limited Notices to Proceed issued to ensure shop drawings commence. Because of cost overruns, GNWT takes over management of project from DCBC, and reaches agreement with project management team to exercise project control.

March 1      Expected announcement of new contractor and project management team

Spring / Beginning of Phase 2, fabrication and installation of superstructure spans and deck  
Summer panels  
/ Fall

## 2011

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Complete fabrication and installation of superstructure spans, deck panels, and finishing work. Opening expected by the end of the year.