

THE WEEK

WATCH: San Francisco's Bay Bridge rebuilt in 4 time-lapse minutes

The newly opened eastern span of the Bay Bridge took 11 years to build. EarthCam makes it look easy.

By Peter Weber | September 4, 2013

At 10:15 Monday night, the new eastern span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge opened to traffic, about seven hours ahead of schedule and \$5 billion over budget. The \$6.4 billion, self-anchored, single-tower suspension span replaces the earthquake-vulnerable eastern span that partially collapsed in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, as the San Francisco Giants were playing the Oakland A's in the World Series.

On Tuesday, EarthCam released a time-lapse video of six years of construction on the bridge. The new span was started in January 2002, and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission brought on 12 EarthCam cameras to document the project in August 2008. EarthCam says it created the four-minute video above by condensing down 42,000 construction hours captured in almost 2 million images.

The final product “shows cranes in action placing various sections and erecting the tower through day and night,” says Jessica Kwong at the San Francisco Examiner, “highlighting the modern engineering of the project rather than the politics that caused years of delays and cost overruns.” Oakland Local calls the time-lapse movie the “cutest-ever construction video.”

San Francisco's iconic Golden Gate Bridge gets all the love, but the Bay Bridge — which opened six months earlier, in 1936 — is the workhorse of the city, with about 280,000 vehicles passing over it each day between San Francisco and Oakland-Berkeley on I-80. The beautiful new span may give the Golden Gate a run for its money.

NBC Bay Area reports that locals have mostly “glowing things” to say about their new bridge: “What people liked most was the ‘cathedral-like’ effect of the clean, simple suspension bridge, compared to the cantilever beams on the old section of the bridge, which boxed drivers in like a cage.”

For anyone nostalgic about the old, unlovely section of bridge now awaiting demolition, the San Jose Mercury News has its own time-lapse videos of the final cars crossing over the old span on its last day of business, on Aug. 28 — a typical summer day in San Francisco: Damp and foggy.

