

Jimmie Davis Bridge to get facelift

A second bridge parallel to the Jimmie Davis Bridge will have to wait, but repairs to the existing Red River crossing are in the works.

An amendment in the state's capital outlay bill allocating \$1.3 million to begin repairs is set to go before the bond commission in September for funding approval.

"This is a first start to get the Jimmie Davis Bridge back in shape," Sen. Barrow Peacock said. "They can start doing planning and engineering and next year move more money into it."

If approved, the allocation would fund the beginning costs of renovations to the bridge, such as engineering work.

An additional \$9.2 million for the remainder of the project was listed as priority five in capital outlay, which means funding should come in the future.

The state Highway 2 bridge near Plain Dealing was used as the example of how much funding would be needed as it was constructed about the same time as the Jimmie Davis Bridge and was rehabilitated several years ago. Plans include lighting, painting and resurfacing of the bridge.

Peacock had originally requested \$119 million to fund revamping the current

bridge and construction of a second bridge to parallel the existing one to make four lanes.

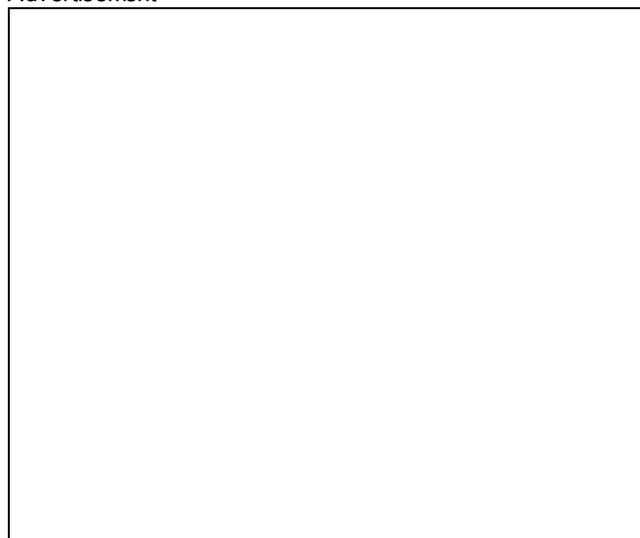
But with Interstate 69 in the works, a bridge could be built farther south near the Port of Caddo-Bossier and later used as the interstate's crossing over the Red River.

Peacock used the Shreveport-Barksdale Highway bridge as an example.

"As the cities moved south, it was never a traffic problem. The question is going to be, over time, is it more practical to put a bridge there or go farther south toward the port where Interstate 69 would potentially cross?"

Piers for the Jimmie Davis Bridge were completed in December 1965 for \$710,000. The site for the bridge was chosen because it was the only section of river bank deemed by state traffic engineers sufficiently stable to support the structure.

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According to The Times archives, an expropriations lawsuit held up construction, and the bridge was opened to motorists in 1968.

It was originally designed to carry 13,500 vehicles per day. According to Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development traffic counts, the bridge carried more than 24,000 per day in 2010.

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