Work on the West Approach is one of a series of seismic safety projects to strengthen the Bay Bridge. Seismic retrofit work on the bridge’s West Span was completed in 2004. Work to completely replace the original eastern span started in 2002. Replacing it will be a dramatic Self-Anchored Suspension (SAS) span, a 1.2-mile long Skyway and a touchdown near the Oakland Toll Plaza. A temporary transition structure at Yerba Buena Island will be required, to allow traffic to safely use the existing bridge and tunnel while the tie-in to the new bridge is completed. After these seismic safety projects are completed, the original eastern span will be demolished.

For more information about the West Approach, visit www.baybridgeinfo.org
SCHEDULING IS KEY
Most of the major demolition and construction work is scheduled at a time when it will be least disruptive to the 280,000 vehicles crossing the bridge each day. However, as with any project of this magnitude, traffic backups and neighborhood impacts are likely to occur. Bridge builders continue to go to extreme lengths to minimize these impacts by scheduling work over weekends and at night. Sometimes it means consolidating work into a condensed time frame. Often, hundreds of workers must toil around-the-clock to get the job done before heavy commute-hour traffic begins.

LABOR DAY CLOSURE
The most challenging work on the West Approach occurred over Labor Day weekend in 2006, when a 1,000-foot segment of roadway on the upper deck was removed in just 77 hours. The roadway is being replaced with a new, seismically upgraded structure. This required the erection of a system of steel beams and columns to support 400 feet of the lower deck; the removal of steel and concrete reinforcements, including 25-ton structural steel bolsters and 22-ton steel columns; the processing of concrete and steel; and the removal of many tons of debris. Extensive plans were also made for dust control, safety monitoring, milestone tracking, and risk mitigation. The work also involved the cooperation of numerous transportation agencies, airports, emergency service providers and many cities and counties.

KEEPING EVERYONE INFORMED
Keeping neighbors, motorists, and the general public informed has been key during major demolition and construction work on the West Approach. Outreach efforts include community meetings, door-to-door canvassing, the staffing of a project hotline, mailings, public service announcements, and media and legislative outreach.

The work on the West Approach over Labor Day weekend required the project’s most extensive outreach campaign, beginning several weeks in advance of the closure and intensifying as it neared. The campaign extended from Mendocino to Bakersfield. It included television, radio, and print announcements; the distribution of nearly one million fact sheets to airports, hotels, hospitals and other venues; and extensive canvassing of residential and commercial neighborhoods.

Because of this comprehensive public outreach, motorists avoided the bridge over Labor Day weekend, and workers were able to finish this enormous task on time!