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## L.A. NOW CALIFORNIA — THIS JUST IN

# New Bay Bridge troll is unveiled by Caltrans on Twitter

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The Bay Bridge troll, seen in front of the newly opened bridge. (Metropolitan Transportation Commission)

By Lee Romney  
This post has been updated. See note below for details.  
September 3, 2013 | 1:29 p.m.

OAKLAND -- As myriad officials celebrated the imminent opening of the long-awaited eastern span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, there was a singular star: The Bay Bridge troll.

Crafted 24 years ago by a blacksmith and artist and slyly transported onto the upper deck under repair after collapse during the Loma Prieta earthquake, the troll has been much celebrated of late, its fate much debated.

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In Case You Missed It

With a dragon head, goat horns and webbed hands and feet, it made a surprise cameo Monday at the official brouhaha, when it was dramatically rolled out on a cart shrouded in a black veil.

Said the man who crafted it all those years ago, who sat quietly in the audience: "It was like 1962 when the Beatles came to town and were mobbed by adoring fans. The troll was a rock star."

The artist, who has been widely identified in other media accounts but prefers anonymity to keep the focus on his creation, said he distinctly remembers measuring the troll at 14 inches by 14 inches when he forged him.

Yet the mythological creature has grown into "a handsome strapping, 24-year-old union bridge worker" and now measures 19 inches tall. (Trolls are known to grow, apparently).

Ironworker James "Fish" Sturgeon, who carefully -- and quietly -- removed the old troll from his perch on a shaded steel beam Friday, told its maker that after cutting the bolts and grinding down the welds, he grabbed the beast to pull it off and met resistance.

"It was as if it was fighting back, not wanting to go, knowing there was still a bridge to protect," he told the artist. "I had to wrestle it off."

Another odd thing, the troll's creator notes: When it was removed its shadow remained on the girder.

"The protective and benevolent magical energy that the troll has been casting on the Bay Area commuters and all the bridge workers has etched the troll's image into the steel," he said Tuesday.

The Bay Area Troll -- er, Toll -- Authority, meanwhile, has been puzzling over just what to do with the troll, and whether to move it to the newest bridge, a single-tower suspension span that cost \$6.4 billion and was many years in the making. It opened to traffic late Monday night.

The favored plan, according to a detailed report, is to protect the former troll in a quiet setting open to the public at the Oakland toll plaza. Meanwhile, authorities put out a call for another surprise creation, noting that a similarly "rogue" troll for the new span would be welcome.

At 8:21 p.m. Monday, the California Department of Transportation tweeted an image of said "new troll," with an ironworker's hammer in one hand and a tong in the other. Its tongue is shorter than its predecessor's and it has a beard.

[Updated at 2:37 p.m., Sept. 3: John Goodwin, a spokesman with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission -- which doubles as the Bay Area Toll Authority -- confirmed that a new creature has come into the possession of "trusted guardians who can be counted upon to make the decisions that are truly in the best interests of the troll."

It arrived at a construction site in an unmarked pickup, he said, stands about 2 feet tall and is made of solid steel.

"It is a fact that there is a new Bay Bridge troll," Goodwin said Tuesday. "It is a fact that the new Bay Bridge troll was revealed last night to a small number of transportation officials and staff. It is a fact that this occurred under cover of darkness given the troll's aversion to direct sunlight."

Now for the rumor part, which cannot be confirmed or denied by authorities: The new troll has a temporary place to stay inside one of the many hollows of the new span while its "guardians" seek the perfect permanent location -- in shade, of course, but possibly also a perch that might be viewed from the pedestrian and bicycle path that made its debut Tuesday.

"Do the perfect conditions exist?" Goodwin asked. "I am not certain that the question has been answered.]"

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