

# Tunnel or Bridge? Genevans Vote in Favor of Lake Crossing

Albertina Torsoli

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The Geneva lanscape with the Jet d'Eau fountain on Lake Geneva.

Photographer: Fabrice Coffrini/AFP via Getty Images

Tunnel or bridge? Although Genevans don't know yet, on Sunday they voted in favor of a crossing of the lake that divides Switzerland's second-largest city.

Sixty-three percent of the ballots cast were in favor of a so-called long crossing, destined to connect the two banks and be part of a ring-road around Geneva, according to preliminary **results** published on the cantonal government's website. Thirty-seven percent voted against it.

"This is a great day for Geneva," **Nathalie Hardyn**, deputy director of the **Geneva Chamber of Commerce**, which was in favor of the proposal, said in a phone interview. "It's a project that's not only meant for car drivers but also for the city's residents and for its companies. It will mean less pollution but also better access to the city for all those people who avoid Geneva because of its traffic, hurting business."

Genevans are stuck in traffic on average 270 days every year, and the lake crossing will help reduce congestion in the city center by about 30 percent, according to proponents of the initiative, which estimate the link will cost as much as 3.3 billion francs (\$3.4 billion). In 2014, voters **rejected** building a smaller tunnel closer to the city center, on concerns it wouldn't have eased congestion.

Opponents of Sunday's initiative warned the lake crossing would worsen traffic in Geneva rather than diminish it. Its cost is being "totally underestimated" and there is **no certainty** the Swiss federation will pay for it, according to Geneva's **Socialist Party**, which recommended voters opt for "no."

Support for the initiative means the principle of a crossing will be inscribed in the constitution. No detail was given in the text of the initiative on whether the crossing will be a bridge or a tunnel, nor is there any certainty on when such a link will be built.

Geneva has been debating a crossing since architect Albert Trachsel proposed a tunnel in 1896. Early in the 20th century the architect Le Corbusier submitted a plan for a bridge. While the government considered six options in the 1960s, funding couldn't be found. A referendum in 1996 rejected plans to build either a bridge or a tunnel.

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