

# Huey P. Long Bridge

On the east side of New Orleans the train passes over a remarkable bridge – unique in design and named for an infamous Louisiana statesman, Huey P. Long. Crossing this narrow old bridge may seem a little unnerving to you, but take a look at the cars passing so close to the train, driving on 9-foot wide lanes with no shoulders!

Located in the Orleans Parish, the Huey P. Long Bridge became one of the first bridges to accommodate both trains and automobiles at the same time! It opened for use in 1936. Instead of having a high hump in the middle to allow boats to pass underneath as most automobile bridges do, note that this bridge is almost flat. In order to accommodate rail traffic, designers had to keep a very gradual grade change.

The foundation of the bridge is also unique. The land in and around New Orleans was formed by silt deposits carried downstream by the Mississippi River. The clay topsoil, notorious for its role in the Hurricane Katrina levee failures, is compressible and unsuitable for foundation loads. There is bedrock about a thousand feet below the surface – much too deep for normal bridge foundation construction. This bridge has been supported for over 70 years, relying strictly on its massive weight and girth to hold the beams in place.

The bridge is named after Huey Pierce Long, Jr. - born in 1893 and died violently in 1935. He served as the Governor of Louisiana from 1928 to 1932 and as a U.S. senator from 1932 to 1935. Did you know he was nicknamed The Kingfish? Long received this moniker when he created the Share Our Wealth programs in 1934, with the motto “Every Man a King.”

Long was an ardent critic of the Federal Reserve System’s policies to reduce lending. Charismatic and immensely popular for his social reform programs and willingness to take forceful action, Long was also strongly criticized by his opponents for his near-total control of the state government, and ruthless treatment of his political enemies. An attempt was made to impeach him on charges of corruption, blasphemy and misuse of state funds, but he had enough support to maintain power.

At the height of his popularity, Long was shot on September 8, 1935, at the Louisiana State Capitol in Baton Rouge. He died two days later at the age of 42. It is unclear whether he

was assassinated or accidentally killed by bodyguards who believed an assassination attempt was in progress. His last words were reportedly, “God, don’t let me die. I have so much left to do.”

As you look out your window, think of the fascinating construction holding this bridge up, the historical icon it is named after, and the motorists on the bridge having a speeding train pass only a few feet away.

## Source(s):

Hoffman, Eva J. "A Guidebook to Amtrak's Sunset Limited." Flashing Yellow Guidebooks, Golden, CO, 2009.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huey\\_Long](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huey_Long)

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