



Bridging the Funding Gap

FHWA Bridge Preservation Program Helps NJ Taxpayers and Travelers



Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti

Maintaining New Jersey’s transportation infrastructure is a core responsibility of the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT). A few months ago, I talked about how NJDOT uses a program called Pavement Preservation to extend the lifespan of certain stretches of state-owned roadway. Today, I would like to share with you another great program that we utilize to help extend the lifespan of our state-owned bridges.



Pictured: Route 7/Wittpenn Bridge in Jersey City.

NJDOT is responsible for maintaining close to **2,600 bridges** throughout the state of New Jersey. Like our highway and interstate system, bridges are an integral part of a thriving transportation infrastructure system and a vital component to our economy. If the transportation system fails, our economy is in jeopardy, families are disconnected and our state is gravely impacted. We must ensure that our bridges are in **a state of good repair**, and the safety of the traveling public is upheld – **keeping our residents and economy moving**.

At times, this can be a difficult task. With the exception of newer bridges which are designed with a 100-year lifespan, the majority of the state’s bridges were built to last only 50 years. On average, our bridge inventory has exceeded the 50 year mark and as much as we would like to design and build new bridges, our limited funding means we have to find ways to stretch our dollars. Extending the lifespan of our current inventory is the best option. This is where Bridge Preservation comes into play.



Pictured: Crews marking areas of delaminated concrete as part of Bridge Preventive maintenance on North Gaston Ave over I-287 in Bridgewater, Somerset County.

Bridge Preservation is a federally funded program that began in 2009 with the goal of providing funding in order to **increase the longevity of the country’s infrastructure**. According to the US Department of Transportation’s (USDOT) Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), bridge preservation prevents, delays, or reduces deterioration of bridges, restores function, keeps bridges in good or fair condition and extends bridge service life. NJDOT was **one of the first** DOTs to implement the program, and over the past 11 years, it has grown to become a vital part of our operations.

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Through Bridge Preservation, around **200** of NJDOT owned bridges receive a preventive maintenance treatment each year. These treatments can include deck patching, sub-structure concrete repair, expansion joint replacement, header repair, deck crack sealing and application of a corrosion inhibitor. These techniques are extremely effective in increasing the bridge's lifespan and end up **saving time, money and overall impact** to the travelling public. For example, corrosion inhibitor slows down the process of rust forming on the rebar, prolonging its structural life.

Making small repairs while a bridge is in good or fair condition limits the likelihood of having to make larger repairs down the road. Similar to pavement preservation, we spend a little time and money now with the goal of **saving a lot of time and money** in the future.

Since 2009, NJDOT has been a leader in bridge preservation. We are proud to be a part of the Northeast Bridge Preservation Partnership (NEBPP)—a partnership that strives to use innovation, new ideas, products and combined experience to make our bridge maintenance procedures and repairs the **best that can be provided**. Our teams enjoy working with other states and helping them increase their bridge preservation maintenance programs.

Our commitment to those living and traveling in New Jersey is to succeed in maintaining our roads and bridges to the best of our ability. We will utilize whatever funding, programs, tools, etc. available to us to ensure that our bridges and highways are **safe, open and operational**. The FHWA Bridge Preservation program is a great program and I look forward to continuing our role in the NEBPP in the future.

My hope is that these newsletters continually provide

Fun Facts About New Jersey's Bridges

Total Number of State Owned Bridges
2,582

Total Bridge Deck Area
36.04 Million Square Feet

Longest Bridge
3.5 miles- Route 1&9/Pulaski Skyway linking Newark and Jersey City

Oldest Bridge (still in use)
228 years old - Route 27 over Millstone River, constructed 1798 (Formerly Route 206 over Stony Brook, constructed in 1792 and rebuilt in 2017)

Highest Bridge
135 foot clearance Route 1&9/Pulaski Skyway

Number of Drawbridges
15

Busiest Drawbridge
Route 71 over the Shark River with 24 openings a day in the summer months

insight into how NJDOT uses funding, data, programs, technology and available resources to best steward our state's transportation infrastructure.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and please feel free to share it with your colleagues. If you have any questions about any of the information in the newsletter please feel free to contact NJDOT's **Office of Community Relations** at **609-963-1982**.

Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti
Commissioner



Pictured: Route 36 Highlands Bridge in Monmouth County.