



Spring 2019

Volume 3

## Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges Open to Traffic in Time for Shore Season Project Demonstrates NJDOT's "Commitment to Communities"



**Diane  
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Most people associate the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) with the infrastructure construction projects that are emblematic of the agency's mission. But all projects are evaluated in the design phase to determine if enhancements to public accommodations are possible. The Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges project is a case study of how NJDOT, in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration, keeps critical infrastructure in a state of good repair and safe for the traveling public while incorporating many features that enrich the character of the communities in which it is located.

It was very gratifying to be with local elected officials and project team members to cut the ribbon for the rehabilitated old bridge as part of the larger Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges project. The project included

construction of a brand new span to complement the rehabilitated old span over Manahawkin Bay, as well as the rehabilitation of spans over Hilliards Thorofare, and East Thorofare and West Thorofare. Through hard work and great collaboration the rehabilitation of the old span was finished a year ahead of schedule, just in time for the busy summer travel season to the Jersey Shore. Located between Stafford Township on the mainland and Ship Bottom on Long Beach Island, the \$319 million project now affords residents and seasonal visitors with safe and modern facilities that provide two lanes of traffic with full shoulders in each direction. This redundancy is so important because the "Causeway," as the entire series of bridges are known to Islanders and area residents, is the only way on and off Long Beach Island for emergency services and for coastal evacuation during severe weather.

Safety is always our primary concern, but as I said when we can use our projects to improve the quality

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of life for the community then we take full advantage. The Route 72 bridges project is a shining example of how we do this. The public accommodations include:

- Room for safe bicycling across all the spans, and a six-foot sidewalk across the old span, where none had existed previously. People now have a way to maintain a healthy lifestyle and get across the bay without getting in their cars.
- Preserving the distinctive “String of Pearls” lighting effect. The “String of Pearls” lighting that adorned the original bridge was innovative in the 1950s when it was designed by NJDOT engineer Dorland J. Henderson, for whom the bridge was named back in 1996. With age, the lighting system became difficult to maintain. Understanding how important this iconic aesthetic is to the community, newly designed roadway lighting elements were installed on the bridges across the bay to retain the “String of Pearls” look while providing better overhead roadway lighting and requiring less maintenance.
- Creating an environmental walking trail with scenic vistas that opened last summer providing the first public access to the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge on Cedar Bonnet Island, which previously had been a storage area for dredge material. NJDOT partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other state and federal stakeholders on this \$9.6 million environmental project that involved wetlands creation, mitigation for existing freshwater wetlands and improvements to storm water basins within the ecologically sensitive Barnegat Bay watershed.
- Providing parking and enhanced fishing and recreation areas around the bridges with railings in some places that make it easier for those with disabilities to fish.

Building safe and reliable infrastructure is our most recognized job at NJDOT, but so is being good stewards of the environment, promoting good health for our residents, providing better access to recreation for everyone, and paying attention to what is important to



the community. Included in this newsletter is a project time line which has more details about the project.

The Jersey Shore, especially Long Beach Island, has some of the best beaches on the east coast. If you visit Long Beach Island take a good look at the Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges. It is so much more than just a way to get across the water. I hope everyone has a safe and enjoyable summer.

**Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti**  
**Commissioner**

