



**NJDOT
NEWS**



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NJDOT Route 71 Shark River Bridge Road Diet Wins 2023 America's Transportation Award Regional award qualifies project for national prize

(Trenton) – New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) Commissioner Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti today announced NJDOT's Route 71 Shark River Bridge Preservation and Road Diet project has been named a regional winner in the [2023 America's Transportation Awards Competition](#).

The awards sponsored by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), AAA, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, are a competition in which state DOTs compete in three categories: Operations Excellence; Best Use of Technology and Innovation; and Quality of Life/Community Development. Each category is designated by project budget size: small (less than \$25 million), medium (\$25 million to \$199 million), and large (\$200 million or more). Projects are judged within their region. The 12 regional winners will compete for the National Grand Prize, the People's Choice Award, and \$10,000 in cash awards that will be given by the winners to a transportation-related charity or scholarship program of their choosing.

The Route 71 Shark River Bridge Preservation and Road Diet project received honors in the Operations Excellence, Small category. [This year's winners](#) were chosen from a selection of 19 projects nominated by nine states in the Northeast Association of State Transportation Officials (NASTO) region.

"This award recognizes the outstanding efforts of the men and women of the New Jersey Department of Transportation and our contractors to find innovative and cost-effective solutions to quickly address issues in a way that creates safer roads and bridges," NJDOT Commissioner Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti said. "The Route 71 Shark River Bridge project demonstrates how New Jersey is leading the way in delivering projects that improve our infrastructure and enrich our communities for all roadway users."

When the Route 71 Drawbridge over Shark River between Belmar and Avon-by-the-Sea in Monmouth County suffered a mechanical failure in September 2021, engineers worked quickly to design and implement a permanent solution that would both preserve the drawbridge and keep it in safe operation. To keep the bridge open, the traffic load needed to be redistributed and balanced properly across the span.

NJDOT implemented a road diet across the bridge, which allowed the Department to address several safety issues. Traffic over the bridge was reduced from one northbound lane and two southbound lanes to one lane in each direction. Signal timings were adjusted, safety improvements at surrounding intersections were installed, and highway signage was enhanced. In addition, bike lanes that previously

ended abruptly were carried across the drawbridge utilizing an innovative bicycle-safe grid, a first-of-its-kind achievement in New Jersey. Click here to [watch a video](#) about the project.

Through this \$150,000 project completed in May 2022, Route 71 over the Shark River between Avon-By-The-Sea and Belmar saw improved traffic flow, increased safety, and reduced congestion in a busy tourist area.

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