

# **ROUTE 52 CAUSEWAY GRAND OPENING**

## **Media Coverage Retrospective**

### **Shore News Today - Four lanes on Route 52 to open on Tuesday**

Written by Ann Richardson Wednesday, 09 May 2012 21:43

The New Jersey State Department of Transportation announced late Wednesday that four lanes of traffic could be flowing across the new Route 52 Bridge and Causeway beginning as early as Monday, May 14.

"We're very excited," Ocean City Mayor Jay Gillian said. "We thank everyone involved in the project."

Gillian said the Department of Transportation, Route 52 Constructors, which includes R.E. Pierson Construction Co., Inc. of Pilesgrove and G.A. and F.C. Wagman, Inc. of York, Pa., deserve a lot of credit for making the process of getting on and off the island as painless as possible for motorists throughout the construction.

Gillian said he especially thanks Gov. Chris Christie for facilitating a number of things to help make sure that the project was kept on schedule and delivered in time for the upcoming Memorial Day Weekend.

An electronic sign was placed on the Route 52 Causeway advising that new traffic patterns would be in effect on Monday. The shift in traffic patterns will allow DOT crews to prepare the causeway for two lanes in both directions, on both of the new bridge structures.

Gillian said he was pleased that the \$400 million project, more than a decade in the making, and with six years of construction, would soon come to an end.

While construction on the Ocean City side of the roadway will be nearly complete, construction on the Somers Point side remains a work in progress.

The new Roy Gillian Welcome Center also remains under construction, as does a fishing pier, multi-use pathway, docks and other amenities on the south side of the roadway.

Gillian said he is pleased that the bridge will be open to four lanes of traffic on busy weekends, particularly Memorial Day.

"We are so grateful," he said. "Everyone worked very hard to make this possible."

The NJDOT is providing an update on the project for members of the Ocean City Regional Chamber of Commerce at a luncheon at the Ocean City Yacht Club on Thursday, May 10.

---

### **Press Of Atlantic City -**

### **Somers Point businesses pleased to hear Route 52 bridge opening next week**

5/10/12

#### **Somers Point businesses pleased to hear Route 52 bridge opening next week**

SOMERS POINT — With the new Route 52 causeway scheduled to open to both directions of traffic next week, the project's leadership spent Wednesday morning updating the Somers Point Business Association and thanking the city's merchants for their cooperation.

"You guys in Somers Point have been fabulous. You put up with a lot of construction and inconveniences," said Carol Beske, president of ACT Engineering. "But I think you will now be the recipients of one of the greatest projects the New Jersey Department of Transportation has ever done in this state ... and I think you will like your new bridge."

Frank Inverso, a project manager for the DOT, said inclement weather in 2010 caused delays for the \$400 million project, but that the weather eventually improved enough for it to be on schedule for a May 15 opening.

"Thank God for global warming," Inverso joked.

On Monday, the DOT will shut down the temporary traffic signals at each end of the bridge, project resident engineer Daniel Lord said.

"We hope to have the permanent traffic signals up and the northbound lanes open to traffic by the next day," Lord said.

Project engineer Sylvester Fryc said the two-phase project is about 80 percent complete.

"We are now in the final stages of this project," said Fryc, adding the remainder of the project — including demolition of existing bridges, completion of the visitor's center and several aesthetic features — should be completed by December.

The dozens of city merchants in attendance applauded the news that not only would the bridge be opening soon, but that it is expected to remain open — in both directions — throughout the summer.

And the only comments for the DOT and engineering officials from the business owners were a thank you for keeping the area near the bridge "clean and accessible," and a question of what the naming opportunities for the bridge were. Recommendations for the latter should be made to the DOT "as soon as possible," Beske said.

Judy Hanlin, the Business Association's president and owner of Bay Harbor Realty, said the project already has helped the city's merchants, even though it is months away from completion.

"It brought in hundreds, if not thousands, of workers here, who stopped in for lunch in our restaurants or to buy some ice cream on the way home. And in these economic times, to have a multimillion-dollar investment come in here that is going to last decades really helps," Hanlin said. "This project brought some much-needed revenue to the city and provided financial stimulus in globally tough economic times."

But Hanlin said she expects the benefits of the project to continue long after the workers leave. She also said Somers Point offers something that its oceanfront neighbor does not.

"Ocean City rejected the BYOB referendum yesterday, so it will remain a family destination," she opened the meeting with. "We will remain the town that's partying and inviting everyone to join us."

---

## Ocean City Patch Causeway to Open By the End of the Business Day Monday

The northbound lanes will be open Monday morning.

- By [Anthony Bellano](#)



Northbound lanes will be open to traffic Monday morning, and by the end of the business day Monday, May 14, all four lanes will be open on the revamped [Route 52 causeway](#), New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) officials confirmed during an [Ocean City Regional Chamber of Commerce](#) luncheon Thursday afternoon, at the [Ocean City Yacht Club](#).

“It’s an all-day event,” NJDOT Resident Engineer Daniel Lord said. “It’s an opening process. I don’t want people to think that come Monday morning, all four lanes will be open.”

But with the opening of the four lanes, the \$400 million construction project that replaced two drawbridges with towering fixed spans and replaced a low-lying roadway with an elevated causeway comes one day closer to completion.

Incidental work will continue that may cause lane closure, Lord said.

“In general, the project is nearly finished,” he said.

The visitor’s center is expected to be complete by the end of August, with a targeted September opening, and the pedestrian and bike path is expected to reach its final conclusion at the same time, although the path from Somers Point to the Rainbow Island Piers will be ready on Monday, Lord said.

Once the lanes are completely reconfigured, the “high speed” bikers can return to the causeway, on the shoulder, and the final traffic lights will be installed. NJDOT officials estimated it would be a few more weeks before they are completely installed.

A left turn lane will be installed on the causeway for those who wish to take advantage of the fishing piers, but no left turn light will be installed.

“There will be a left turn lane, and they can turn when traffic allows,” Lord said.

“There will be a yield motion like the major routes around here have. The bridge is designed for ample sight distance.”

On the Somers Point side, there's still work to be done around Somers Mansion, a new boardwalk will be added to the west side of the bridge, and a new boat launch will be installed. The Somers Point side of the project involved the removal of the Somers Point circle.

The whole project, which has been under construction for six years and in discussion even longer than that, is expected to be completely finished in December.

Three Ocean City mayors oversaw the project from its start to its approaching finish, beginning with Bud Knight, who was in attendance during Thursday's luncheon.

"My goal was to see it completed in my lifetime, so I'm grateful for that," Knight said. "I'm grateful that it was done with very few delays and inconveniences for local businesses."

"The state helped Ocean City and Somers Point become prosperous and safe," Ocean City Mayor Jay Gillian said. "... This was all about two communities working together for public safety. It's a state of the art bridge. It will help in weather-related situations, and when people need to get to the hospital."

The project was designed to make travel safer.

"It's a new recreation business, with fishing and kayaking and the visitor's center. It's not just a bridge; it's a whole new attraction."

The total cost of the project was \$500 million, including design and construction. It's the biggest project in the state, and was labeled a once-in-a-lifetime project by a few people at Thursday's luncheon.

"We won't ever see another project like this," said Michele Gillian, Executive Director of the Ocean City Regional Chamber of Commerce. "... It's great for Ocean City. It's a great way to show off our amenities and attractions."

Discussions for the project initially began in the 1980's, Michele Gillian said.

"I can't wait until I can finally walk across it," said Debbie Clark, who sits on the Ocean City Historic Museum Board. "It's hard to believe it's finally here."

---

## **Press of AC - Four lanes now open on Route 52 bridge from Somers Point to Ocean City**

By LEE PROCIDA, Staff Writer [pressofAtlanticCity.com](http://pressofAtlanticCity.com) |

Posted: Wednesday, May 16, 2012 12:30 am | Updated: 6:39 am, Wed May 16, 2012.

[PressOfAtlanticCity.com](http://PressOfAtlanticCity.com)

All four lanes of the Route 52 bridge from Somers Point to Ocean City opened Tuesday morning, marking a major milestone in the \$500 million project, nearly six years after construction began.

"This is the first time in four years that we're not going to have to worry about traffic problems over closing and opening lanes," said Michele Gillian, executive director of the Ocean City Chamber of Commerce. "We couldn't ask for a nicer gift for Ocean City than that."

The old bridge, which has since been demolished, was a constant cause for congestion. That bridge had two lanes in each direction, but the new lanes are two feet wider. Each side of the roadway has 5- to 11-foot-wide shoulders to allow for emergencies; formerly there were none.

Construction is ongoing, so there will be partial lane closures at times, Department of Transportation officials said. Other elements of the bridge, including a new visitors center and full pedestrian access between Somers Point and Ocean City, will open later this year.

Fishing piers and shared-use walking and biking lanes opened as far as Rainbow Island on Tuesday.

The Schwartz family of Norristown, Pa., rents a home every year in Ocean City, and they were among the first people to check out one of the fishing piers Tuesday afternoon.

"There are going to be tons of people here in the summer," said Blair Schwartz Jr., as he, his father, Blair Sr., and brother Brian, all fishermen, toured the concrete walkway.

To access the newly opened piers and a boat launch on Rainbow Island, there is a pull-off and parking lot on the southbound side of the bridge as it touches down onto Rainbow Island. There are four fishing piers and several boat ramps on the bridge, including piers on the Somers Point side, two on Rainbow Island and two on Garretts Island.

The Schwartzes were on one of the two piers there that extends below and parallel to the bridge. They said they expected there to be prime fishing there, and there would be plenty of room for anyone who wanted to fish.

Blair Schwartz Jr. had one recommendation, though.

"They might need to put some Porta-Potties over there," he said.

---

## Ocean City Sentinel – Editorial: Not a bridge too far

### **Editorial: Not a bridge too far**

Rt. 52 causeway worth the wait

Published in the May 16, 2012 issue

This summer will be the first in more than 70 years when motorists crossing into Ocean City from Somers Point on the Route 52 causeway won't drive across a bascule bridge.

Built in 1933, the original bridge and causeway is now a fading memory, replaced by a \$500 million causeway linking Ocean City to the mainland.

It's remarkable to ponder the most expensive New Jersey Department of Transportation construction project happened here.

We think it was worth every penny.

The rusting, aging causeway needed to be scrapped and redesigned as a safe connection and evacuation route for this barrier island.

When construction began in 2006, Ocean City dealt with periodic headaches of the old causeway's rusty drawbridges locking up during summer months, as heat caused the metal to contract and remain open. This caused backups and interminable frustration to motorists who sat in the gridlocked traffic.

The demolition and construction process hasn't been easy on residents, who faced many bridge closures as the contractors removed the old causeway and constructed concrete pilings towering over the bay.

When it appeared the contractors wouldn't meet their deadline last year before the busy summer season, local and state officials met and reached an agreement with the contractors. All concerns were addressed and the bridge opened additional travel lanes during the summer to accommodate the rush of tourists.

Ocean City and Somers Point didn't just get a new causeway. They got a series of smaller bonuses courtesy of the NJDOT: a shared bicycle and pedestrian lane, making it possible for cyclists and pedestrians to travel between Ocean City and Somers Point safely.

Add to this a few fishing piers and boat ramps, scenic overlooks and walkways where visitors can enjoy the natural beauty and recreational opportunities the back bay offers.

A brand new welcome center for Ocean City is slowly taking shape on the causeway and is slated for a late 2012 opening.

In Somers Point, the old traffic circle at the foot of the causeway was removed and a new four-way intersection installed. Landscaping and aesthetic improvements are in the works for the historic Somers Mansion, and an old railroad bridge on Shore Road was eliminated. MacArthur Boulevard to Route 9 received landscaping and road improvements, including resurfacing and new traffic lights.

Ocean City's Ninth Street also received a facelift. Ornate streetlamps, landscaping and paved crosswalks grace the foot of the causeway, and a sign welcomes motorists to America's Greatest Family Resort.

Through the many construction delays, the temporary lane and bridge closures, locals waited patiently for years. The many backups, the aggravation and questions swirling around the rising concrete spans became the subject of ire and frustration.

Now we can see a magnificent engineering marvel, bringing the outside world to our doorstep.

The causeway project was, as NJDOT resident engineer Dan Lord characterized it, a "once in a lifetime experience."

For locals and visitors alike, the causeway will serve this area for decades to come, its amenities providing more than a connection between Point A and Point B. It will be a calm vista for birdwatchers, a place to ride your bicycle, a location for fishing and a way for guests to obtain information about Ocean City.

To the NJDOT, George Harms Construction and the Route 52 Constructors, as well as the engineers and officials involved with this project, we thank you. The final product is worth the long wait.

[http://www.ocsentinel.com/article.php?article\\_id=4636](http://www.ocsentinel.com/article.php?article_id=4636)

---

## Ocean City Sentinel - All four lanes on Rt. 52 causeway open

### **Ex-mayor Knight: I wanted to see this in my lifetime**

Published in the May 16, 2012 issue

By Eric Avedissian

**Ocean City** — Members of the New Jersey Department of Transportation (DOT) and contractors for the \$500 million Route 52 causeway replacement project told the Ocean City Regional Chamber of Commerce the new span would open to traffic Monday, May 14.

The chamber of commerce met on May 10 at the Ocean City Yacht Club, where attendees viewed the causeway through picture windows across the bay.

Ocean City and Somers Point residents have lived with construction on the causeway since the project to replace the aging 70-year old causeway began in 2006.

The project, the largest bridge replacement project in the state, cost \$500 million, which includes \$400 million in construction costs.

Carol Beske, president of ACT Engineers, Inc. coordinated with the contractors to rebuild the causeway. Beske said the first community partnering effort began in 2002. After many task force and public meetings, the causeway was redesigned and final construction plans developed.

"I know at times it's not been easy for the businesses, and at times it's not been easy for the elected officials and their staff," Beske said.

David Lambert, program manager with the Division of Project Management for the DOT, said he was involved with the causeway replacement project in 1997. Lambert said he met with then-mayor Henry Knight to discuss the causeway.

"I promised Mayor Knight at that meeting that I would stick by this job and get this thing built. Look out the window. There it is. The Route 52 causeway," Lambert said to tremendous applause.

Lambert called the final product "a tribute to the people in the trenches" including engineers and contractors.

Knight recalled how cooperative the state was, listening to the city's concerns. He said there have been a few delays and inconveniences during construction during the mammoth project.

"My bottom line was I wanted to see the completion of this in my lifetime, and it's happened so I feel grateful for that," Knight said.

Project Manager Frank Inverso said the Route 52 causeway is unique because of its many amenities.

"It's something that we'll probably never see again, with a bridge like this," Inverso said. "Hopefully it will make the town thrive."

DOT resident engineer Dan Lord said the project was a "once in a lifetime experience."

The causeway's northbound bridge opened to traffic, creating two lanes in each direction on Monday, May 14. Lord said some "incidental work" will still occur, necessitating short-term lane closures during the summer.

Lord said additional work in Somers Point includes a parking lot and aesthetic improvements around the historic Somers Mansion. A boat launch is being built on the footprint of the old bridge, and a new boardwalk will be constructed on the west side of the new bridge, leading to a fishing pier.

He added a new Ocean City visitor's center is slated to open later this year.

"The bridge itself is complete. There's some work on each approach that needs to be done. That will be completed later in the summer or early fall," Lord said. "Hopefully that won't detract from the enjoyment of this beautiful facility you will have open this summer."

Sylvester Fryc, project manager for Michael Baker Jr., Inc., the project's engineers, also heralded the new causeway as unique.

"It is definitely a once in a lifetime project. It's a lot more than a typical roadway and bridge replacement project. We are building many public amenities that will benefit both communities here," Fryc said.

According to Fryc, the goal of replacing the bridge was to replace the aging bridge to improve safety, access for emergency response vehicles and emergency evacuation route. He said another goal, to create access to recreational areas, included boat slips, a bicycle and pedestrian walkway and fishing piers.

George Harms Construction completed the first stage, or Contract A of the project, which began in 2006 and ended in 2009. That stage included replacing two bridges that span Elbow Thorofare and Rainbow Channel.

The second and current project stage, Contract B, is being completed by Route 52 Constructors, a joint venture by R.E. Pierson Construction, Co. and G.A. & F.C. Wagman Inc. and consists of constructing a 55-foot high fixed-span bridge over Ship Channel and Beach Thorofare including the touchdown points in Ocean City and Somers Point, and the demolition of the old bridge.

Contract B also includes construction of a new Ocean City Visitor's Center on the causeway, a multi-use recreational walkway for bicyclists and pedestrians, several fishing piers and improvements along MacArthur Boulevard in Somers Point, including the replacement of the Somers Point Circle with a signalized intersection.

Asked about the backup on the bridge from the Somers Point traffic signals, Lord said an additional turning lane will be added and new traffic lights installed.

Mayor Jay Gillian thanked state DOT representatives, contractors and engineers by presenting them with commemorative plaques made out of pieces of Ocean City's famous Boardwalk.

Gillian said the entire project was a "team effort" between the state and the cities of Ocean City and Somers Point.

"That's what it's like in Ocean City, we all do work together. I know we had one bad meeting when you guys were talking about closing it, but we got through it. We kept businesses open and the economy with the way it is, to have this beautiful half a billion dollar bridge all of the taxpayers in New Jersey and even some federal money that was put there, we should thank the taxpayers. The state of New Jersey helped out New Jersey and Somers Point become very prosperous and very safe," Gillian said.

Michele Gillian, executive director of the Ocean City Regional Chamber of Commerce said local businesses would benefit from the new causeway.

"This project made it easier for businesses to stay in business," she said.

---

## Philly Inquirer - Revamped Causeway offers access to Ocean City, N.J.

### **Thanks partly to good weather, work is completed five months ahead of schedule.**

May 17, 2012|By Jacqueline L. Urgo, Of The Philadelphia Inquirer

OCEAN CITY, N.J. — As Memorial Day weekend bears down on this popular Cape May County resort, where the population increases tenfold on summer weekends, the highlight of the tourist season may already have occurred.

The Route 52 Causeway, that once-dreaded stretch of stressful driving between here and Somers Point, is fully reopened — with wider lanes, no drawbridges and a full-length bicycle and hiking path.

All four lanes of the 2.8-mile north-south route — two in each direction — were back in [business](#) this week, marking the near-conclusion of the six-year, \$396 million New Jersey Department of Transportation rebuilding project.

The official ribbon-cutting is set for next week, just before the onslaught of holiday traffic, according to New Jersey Transportation Department spokesman Timothy Greeley.



But state and tourism officials are already exultant, calling the project an example of how a road can be so much more than a means of getting from point A to point B.

The opening "fulfills a promise made to local residents and [business owners](#) to restore full capacity of the important roadway prior to Memorial Day," Greeley said. Quick work, due partly to good weather, shaved five months off the construction schedule.

In recent days, crews have been painting lines, installing signs, and generally putting on the finishing touches. And drivers have had a chance to ride the road, including two bridges, that curves and flows like a magic [carpet](#) over the sounds and bay and little islets that separate the barrier island from the mainland.

Traffic-flow issues also are being ironed out with installation of permanent stoplights at either end of the causeway — at Route 9 and Mays Landing Road in Somers Point and at Ninth Street and Bay Avenue in Ocean City — Greeley said. About 40,000 [cars](#) will use the causeway on a typical summer day, officials estimated.

Drivers will no longer have to contend with the traffic circle at the foot of the bridge in Somers Point. Nor must they fear the two ancient drawbridges that snarled traffic — sometimes for hours — when they got stuck in the upright position after opening for marine traffic. The new fixed spans provide 55 feet of clearance for boats, officials said.

Without a center median, the old artery was the site of frequent head-on collisions, some fatal. The new road is divided, and sometimes split. Because of the improvements, the speed limit has been increased to 40 mph, DOT officials said.

The road planners, who began their design work a decade ago, realized the area's natural [assets](#) and potential: wetlands that are sanctuaries for nesting birds and aquatic species; prime bay access for boaters, kayakers, and fishers; and the perfect place to build an attractive tourist welcome center.

For the first time, bikers and hikers will be able to use Route 52 as a path between the mainland and the shore. A walkway, almost completed, runs the length of the route and provides greater access to the resort's picturesque bay side. A new boat launch, docks, and fishing pier will open next week at roughly the causeway's midpoint.

---

## **Press of AC - Much more than a bridge: Fishing pier, visitors center, engineering marvels part of new \$500 million Route 52 causeway attraction**

by Lee Procida

Posted: Saturday, May 19, 2012 11:30 pm | *Updated: 11:48 pm, Sat May 19, 2012.*

### **Discover the details and the numbers on the new Route 52 bridge.**

An engineer looks at the span and sees a modern marvel of steel, concrete and rebar that spans two miles of the Great Egg Harbor Bay.

"It's spectacular," said Patrice Malleus, president of the American Society of Highway Engineers, Southern New Jersey Section, on a recent tour of the site. "I'm blown away."

An average driver looks at the new Route 52 causeway and sees a better way to and from Ocean City — a badly needed replacement for a crumbling old bridge.

“It was dangerous, it was narrow, it was bumpy, it was brutal,” said Gregory Kelchner, of Bay Avenue in Ocean City.

The entire \$500 million Route 52 project is the most expensive ever for the New Jersey Department of Transportation, and it’s much more than just a bridge. Its aesthetics and amenities make it an attraction on its own.

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime project,” said Frank Inverso, project manager for the DOT.

All four lanes of the new bridge opened Tuesday, the primary milestone since construction began in the summer of 2006. The final elements of the project will be completed by December, on time, as originally planned.

Exactly a century has passed since the first wooden bridge was built over the bay to Ocean City. It was replaced in 1933 by the concrete structure that stood until recently, having been mostly demolished and trucked away during the past few years.

The new span largely traces that same route, retaining the S-curve on the way into the island that was originally necessary to avoid conflicting with now long-gone trolley trestles on Eighth Street.

Over time, Ocean City grew in popularity as a summer resort, and more boaters started using the Intracoastal Waterway and needed the drawbridges to open.

Two drawbridges on the old span opened an average of 3,250 times per year, as many as 22 times a day in the summer, according to the DOT. Boaters had to call the drawbridge operators ahead of time to be let through, and often had to wait.

When it was too hot, the bridges got stuck open, causing long traffic backups — as many as 40,000 cars cross the bridge each day in July and August — until the fire department came and hosed down the overheated metal.

That wasn’t just annoying — it was dangerous.

The causeway is the primary evacuation route for Ocean City. It did little good during powerful storms, when waves would overtop its railings.

Official discussions on replacing the bridge began in 1992, and more than a dozen alternative ideas for the project were considered over the years. The plan eventually chosen was meant to minimize the impact on private property and the sensitive tidal environments surrounding the bridge.

The new fixed spans will each be 55 feet above the water, permitting nearly all boats that would normally travel through the drawbridges to pass safely underneath.

Lanes have been expanded from 10 to 12 feet each, with shoulders of 5, 8 and 11 feet in width where there were originally none. Those changes are projected to reduce accidents by 20 percent.

The bridge is 2.2 miles long, but the entire project is 2.8 miles in length, from Route 9 in Somers Point to West Avenue in Ocean City. Other road improvements, making up \$35 million of the total project,

included widening MacArthur Boulevard in Somers Point, replacing the Somers Point circle with a signalized intersection and raising Ninth Street in Ocean City to prevent flooding.

And then there's everything on the sides of the roadway, with dramatically improved pedestrian and bicycle access and unprecedented opportunities for fishermen, boaters, birdwatchers and tourists of all kinds.

Shared walkways will stretch the length of the bridge, making it safe to walk from Somers Point to Ocean City for the first time when they fully open later in the summer. Along that path there are four fishing piers, two boat ramps, several scenic outlooks and a visitors center that provides an unparalleled view of the bay from its second level.

"It really is another location that's recreational," said Michele Gillian, executive director of the Ocean City Chamber of Commerce, whose new offices will be located in the new visitors center. "It provides a whole new look at Ocean City. ... We'll really be highlighting the bay."

The two fishing piers that are already opened were filled with fishermen on a recent sunny afternoon. The bridge has been known as a good fishing location for years, because of its deep channels, but there was little access.

"Any spot that people can get to with good parking, without having to search for, they'll just flock to," said Jay Caldwell, of Mays Landing, an employee at Tackle Direct on Tilton Road in Egg Harbor Township.

The bridge's view will be beautiful during the day, but it is intended to be part of the scenery at night.

Underneath the bridge's highest arches are rows of LED lights that will shine downward on piers, creating unique lighting effects because of the piers' "bow tie" shapes.

It hardly needs to be said that much more planning went into making the structure look picturesque.

"The old bridge was ugly. Did you see it?" said Dave Lambert, DOT director of bridge engineering and infrastructure management. "It looked like Stonehenge."

Nevertheless, the former bridge, formally called the World War Memorial Bridge, was historic, and pieces of it will be on display near the new bridge and in local museums.

But in comparing the two bridges, there is no comparison.

"There are a million different things that make this better," Kelchner said.

---

## **CBS 3 Philly - Shore Bets To the Beach, Part 1: Ocean City, NJ**

*May 21, 2012 3:06 AM*

**By Mike DeNardo**

OCEAN CITY, N.J. (CBS) — Perhaps the most dramatic improvement that shore travelers will see on the way to Ocean City, NJ is the new Route 52 causeway linking Ocean City with Somers Point.

"There used to be huge lines when there was a circle there," recalls one man.

Now, the Somers Point circle is gone — replaced with a signalized intersection.

And after six years and \$400 million worth of construction, the creaky drawbridges have given way to two modern dual-lane spans.

"We are so excited to have a normal traffic pattern in Ocean City," says [Ocean City Chamber of Commerce](#) executive director Michele Gillian (right). "Also, we won't have bridges going up and down. So the flow's going to be even easier."

And Gillian expects the causeway bridge will become an attraction on its own, with a new visitors' center being built mid-span.

"People are going to enjoy just the bridge itself," she tells *KYW Newsradio*, "because there's so many things you can do on it: crabbing, fishing, boating, waterskiing, [kayaking](#). We're going to have all those resources right there."

Gillian says fully 80 percent of Ocean City's visitors enter by the causeway.

---

## Shore News Today - AT LARGE: Dave Lambert's Route 52 story

Last Updated on Tuesday, 22 May 2012 20:46

Written by Tom Williams Tuesday, 22 May 2012 19:59

After years of detours, closed lanes and other inconveniences, the Route 52 Causeway connecting Ocean City and Somers Point is open. You can now drive from one community to the other on safe bridges with no oncoming traffic and no fear of those fearsome bridge openings.

They guy who guided this project for the past six years is Dave Lambert, originally from Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley and a graduate of Lafayette College with a degree in civil engineering. He expected to go to work for the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (DOT) after graduation but he got a better offer from NJDOT.

Most of us cannot even comprehend how to go about building a bridge like these. A suspension bridge seems even more incredible. But hundreds of workers were employed during the construction and the results are impressive.

"As far as the construction," Lambert said, "it went pretty smooth. The contract was broken into two pieces A and B. Contract A was the middle part of the causeway, the two lower level bridges. The reason we did them first was that the lower bridges were in the worse condition. I'd done some work on those bridges before and they were in the kind of condition that you would lose sleep at night. It's mostly because of the salt water. But those bridges were built in 1933 when they didn't understand about corrosion. And we still got more than 75 years out of them."

There were some problems, though, before construction began.

"In the Fall of 2005," Lambert said, "when Contract A was first advertised, the design was segmental concrete boxes and it was not going to touch down on Rainbow Island, like it does now. The price of concrete and steel was through the roof then because China and India had cornered the market. And we had a couple hurricanes. When we got the bids, they were way above the engineer's estimate. We didn't have enough money so we rejected the bids and went back to the drawing board."

Things got better after a few changes.

"We re-packaged the project and developed the I-beam design. We also came up with the idea to take the bridge down to Rainbow Island. It made a big difference. The low bid among the original bids that were rejected was \$243 million for Contract A. When we took bids on the second the design, that was in the spring of 2006, the low bid was \$150 million. We obviously ended up saving a lot of money with the new design."

Lambert expects the new bridges to have a life of more than a century. They have been raised to avoid as much exposure to salt water spray as possible.

Then, once the lower level bridges were completed, came the second contract./

"Contract B was the high-level bridge and the circle elimination," he said. "It went out in 2009. And here we are. The roadway is finished with just the visitor's center and a few other things that will be completed by the end of the year."

The project was helped by money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), sometimes called the federal stimulus package.

"We got \$70 million dollars from ARRA on Contract B," Lambert said, "and it was a very positive thing. Without that money from the federal government we would have had to float a bond to keep the project going and on schedule. Doing that would have cost New Jersey millions of dollars in interest. So, we were very glad to get that federal money."

Not only did the federal government help, but so did the weather.

"The weather was outstanding, especially this winter. It was like a winter with no winter. We were able to cast concrete decks in January and February. There were a few storms in previous winters and things got dicey a couple times, but we recovered. This is definitely the apex of the projects I've been involved with. I started in project management in 1993. One of my first jobs was the 195-295 interchange in Trenton. It was broken down into three separate projects and cost over \$200 million."

Since he started on the causeway, Lambert has had a series of promotions. He is now New Jersey's Director of Bridge Engineering. His department is currently developing three significant projects, including the I295-Route 42-I76 direct connection job in Camden County.

Repairing our infrastructure is important in this country. It is an effort that would only make travel safer and save lives but would also provide jobs that would continue to stimulate a recovering economy. In fact, NJDOT has increased the amount of money it is putting into bridge repair.

"Our goal in the next 10 years," Lambert said, "is to decrease the number of deficient bridges in New Jersey by 50 percent."

Something new has been added to our community, something that will make us all a little safer and make our travels in and out of town more convenient.

"I get great pride and satisfaction when I look at these bridges," Lambert said, "when seeing the final product. When I first took this job over to Bud Knight, who was Ocean City's mayor, there had been a number of project managers come and go, so he was a little apprehensive. And understandably so. But I told him I would see this through. It makes me proudest that I could keep my word to him."

The causeway will be formally dedicated on Thursday and Dave Lambert will be the guy there with the biggest smile.

---

## Press of AC - People walk, ride and drive over Route 52 causeway to celebrate grand opening

By LEE PROCIDA Staff Writer [pressofAtlanticCity.com](http://pressofAtlanticCity.com) |

Posted: Thursday, May 24, 2012 10:15 pm | Updated: 11:41 pm, Thu May 24, 2012.

[PressOfAtlanticCity.com](http://PressOfAtlanticCity.com)

Ocean City Mayor Jay Gillian on Thursday thanked the group that made the new Route 52 causeway possible: Taxpayers.

"Without your support, residents and visitors would be waiting through another summer of bridge openings," he said.

Traffic will no longer have to stop for drawbridges that used to get stuck open as many as 22 times a day in the summer. Traffic is also expected to flow smoother through the new, fixed spans' wider 12-foot lanes.

Gillian joined more than 100 dignitaries and excited locals who drove, biked and walked across the causeway for the bridge's grand opening ceremony.

Dozens of bicycles traveled across the bridge on the new causeway's 11-foot wide shoulders and 10-foot-wide walkway.

"This is more than complete streets," said DOT Commissioner James Simpson, "This project is so much about quality of life."

Visitors can now see the ocean before they even reach the city from high atop the span that curves onto the island, reaching 75 feet in the air at its peak.

"It's like you're cleared for landing," Simpson said, comparing it to when he used to fly into Ocean City as a pilot.

All four lanes to the new bridge opened earlier this month, marking the most important milestone of the most expensive transportation project ever completed by the New Jersey Department of Transportation.

The project totaled about \$500 million, combining construction, engineering, land acquisition and permitting costs — and those present at Thursday's event said it was worth it.

"Everyone has their stories with the bridges being stuck," said U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo, R-2nd, speaking of the two drawbridges that used to get stuck open, especially on hot days.

Motorists had to wait at least once more Thursday, as police temporarily blocked traffic as a fire truck lead the rows of vehicles from John F. Kennedy Park in Somers Point to the foot of the bridge in Ocean City.

Some construction will continue through the summer and fall to complete projects such as the two-story visitors center, building two more fishing piers and opening of the shared use walkway across the length of the bridge, which is only now open halfway.

---

## Ocean City Patch - Officials Celebrate Route 52 Project

Traffic lanes are at full capacity in time for the summer season.

- By [Douglas Bergen](#)



Federal, state and local officials gathered Thursday morning at Kennedy Park in Somers Point — with the new Route 52 causeway as a backdrop — to celebrate the completion of travel lanes on the new causeway in time for the summer tourist season.

### Photos



Ten days after it opened to full traffic and a day before Memorial Day Weekend, officials gathered Thursday to celebrate the progress of the Route 52 causeway project.

Federal, state and local officials marked the completion of the travel lanes of the new causeway in a ceremony at Kennedy Park in Somers Point — with Great Egg Harbor Bay and the new causeway as a backdrop.

The entourage then boarded trolleys and — accompanied by public safety vehicles and a small group of bicyclists — crossed the causeway for a ribbon-cutting at the foot of the new Ninth Street Bridge in Ocean City.

The causeway provides the main route into Ocean City for residents and visitors, and a six-year, \$400 million project — the most expensive bridge project New Jersey has ever completed — completely replaced the 2.2-mile causeway. Two towering fixed-span bridges were constructed, and two aging drawbridges were removed. A elevated roadway connects the two new bridges.

Construction crews are continuing work on a new mid-causeway visitors center, fishing piers, boat ramps, a separated pedestrian/bicycle path and other amenities. The project will be fully complete by the end of 2012.

But with two travel lanes in each direction completed ahead of schedule, officials took time Thursday to congratulate each other, thank the public for its patience, and remark on an project they say will be a triumph for the economy, recreation and public safety.

"This is a great way to kick off the summer tourist season, with the new causeway and bridges providing safe and convenient access to this stretch of the Jersey Shore," state Department of Transportation Commissioner James Simpson said.

Simpson emphasized that the project is more than a roadway with its various recreational facilities.

"This project is so much about quality of life, and about really enjoying and appreciating the place," he said.

Simpson said the state, in similar fashion, will now work to open the long-closed and nearby Beesleys Point Bridge to pedestrian and bicycle traffic (along with eliminating the traffic lights on the Garden State Parkway in Cape May County).



Ocean City Mayor Jay Gillian thanked government officials, union laborers, residents and visitors of Ocean City and Somers Point, and taxpayers for their support of the project.

"I see nothing but great things," Gillian said.

The procession to the other side of the causeway for the ribbon-cutting ceremony included a handful of bicyclists using the wide shoulder of the new causeway — the separate pedestrian/bicycle sidewalk is open only to the fishing pier entrance midway across the causeway.

Ocean City Police Chief Chad Callahan said the shoulders of the highway will remain open to bicyclists. No date for the full opening of the separated sidewalk has been announced.

G.A. & F.C. Wagman, Inc., of York, PA, and R.E. Pierson Construction Co., Inc., of Pilesgrove, are completing the \$256 million second phase of the project. DOT Project Manager Frank Inverso said that final costs are still being determined but that the project should be "very close" to budget.

---

## **NBC 40 - Officials cut ribbon on Route 52 Causeway**

Video - <http://www.nbc40.net/news/22481/video>

SOMERS POINT/OCEAN CITY -- After six years, the Route 52 Causeway connecting Somers Point and Ocean City is now formally open for travel, just before the busy Memorial Day Weekend.

New Jersey Department of Transportation, Somers Point, Ocean City and other officials officially opened the \$400 million project Thursday morning. The causeway is one of the largest replacement projects in NJDOT history.

The old bridge was known to cause headaches for commuters, especially during the summer months, and officials hope the new bridge will alleviate those problems.

"No matter how great the beaches are, if people can't get to them, it's not a good thing, no matter how great the board walk is, no matter how great the shops are, you have to be able to have people get back and forth," said Congressman Frank LoBiondo.

The event consisted of a short speaking program followed by a procession over the new bridge by trolley to a ribbon cutting on the Ocean City side of the bridge.

---

# **NBC Philadelphia - New Bridge for Ocean City Opens in Time for Memorial Day**

## **Ocean City to Somers Point causeway opens to traffic**

Thursday, May 24, 2012 | Updated 4:41 PM EDT

|



The ride to Ocean City just got easier.

Officials on Friday opened the \$400-million Route 52 Causeway in South Jersey in time for the Memorial Day holiday weekend.

The causeway links Somers Point in Atlantic County with Ocean City in Cape May County.

"This is a great way to kick off the summer tourism season, with the new causeway and bridges providing safe and convenient access to this stretch of the Jersey Shore," [NJDOT Commissioner James Simpson said in a press release](#). "The Christie Administration understands the connection between investments in our transportation infrastructure and a strong economy. Easing travel to popular destinations enables residents and visitors to support local businesses while enjoying New Jersey's natural beauty and recreational opportunities."

The causeway provides wider lanes. It also includes shoulders and a 10-foot-wide walkway. The old causeway had no walkway and no shoulders to accommodate disabled or emergency vehicles.

The project also included the replacement of two lift bridges at either end of the causeway with fixed spans to allow boat traffic to pass without the need to stop motor vehicles.

Construction on the causeway portion of the project between the two bridges began in late 2006 and was completed in 2009. That phase cost to replace 1.2 miles of roadway cost \$145 million, according to NJDOT.

[Work on the bridges](#) -- a \$256-million project -- was completed earlier this month.

The old 9th Street Bridge, demolished during the final phase, stood for 78 years.

---

**Press of AC - Route 52 causeway passes first major test**

Posted: Monday, May 28, 2012 1:00 am | *Updated: 7:22 am, Mon May 28, 2012.*

by Lee Procida

Vehicles enter the Route 52 Causeway in Somers Point heading to and from Ocean City. The Memorial Day weekend is the first holiday test of the span since it opened. Sunday, May, 27, 2012. ( Press of Atlantic City/Danny Drake)

The new Route 52 causeway from Somers Point to Ocean City served its purpose Memorial Day weekend by smoothly channeling the tens of thousands of visitors to the shore Friday evening and Saturday morning.

The \$500 million project took nearly six years to complete, from the beginning of construction to the opening of four new and widened lanes over two miles earlier this month.

Traffic was still heavy at the start of the weekend, but it appeared to pass its first test for handling the huge influx of visitors to Ocean City.

"I think it's been running very smoothly," said Aimee Repici, owner of the Chatterbox restaurant on Ninth Street, just a short distance from where the bridge touches down in Ocean City.

The new causeway was the most expensive single project ever undertaken by the New Jersey Department of Transportation, although it will soon be surpassed by much larger projects, such as the reconfiguration of the interchange between Interstates 295 and 76 and Route 42.

There are three other bridges into Ocean City, but Route 52 is the primary access point and evacuation route. The former aging bridge was in disrepair and could barely handle the 40,000 cars that travel it daily in the summer months, let alone the massive crowds that visit on holiday weekends.

The old causeway had two drawbridges that would open more than 20 times per day during the summer, and they often got stuck in a raised position if it was too hot, snarling traffic all the way across the bridge and into Somers Point.

There was still significant traffic getting into the island Friday and Saturday as motorists encountered back-ups once they entered Ocean City, but it was nowhere near the snarls that were once commonplace.

"Just because you have a new bridge doesn't mean there isn't going to be traffic," Ocean City Police Chief Chad Callahan said. "There is always going to be traffic."

There were also no major reported accidents on the bridge over Friday and Saturday when bridge traffic peaked. The new lanes are each two feet wider than the lanes on the old bridge in order to improve safety, and there are wide shoulders to accommodate cars that are in an accident or break down.

Those improvements and an adjustment of the curve at the end of the bridge as it leads into Ocean City were projected by DOT engineers to reduce accidents on the bridge by 20 percent.

The project is still ongoing, with a visitors center, two fishing piers and other features set to be completed by the end of the summer or early fall.

The main feature was the widened lanes, and motorists said they were extremely grateful to see them open for Memorial Day weekend after dealing with construction since 2006.

"It's obviously so much better," said Tom Caraccio, of Philadelphia, who regularly visits Ocean City and stopped to look at one of the new fishing piers on the bridge. "We still got stuck in traffic on the parkway and expressway, but it was great to not have that as much on the bridge anymore."

---

## **NBC 40 – Tourists say Route 52 causeway eases traffic problems during first busy weekend**

<http://www.nbc40.net/news/22523/video>

OCEAN CITY-- The new Route 52 Causeway connecting Somers Point and Ocean City was opened last week, just in time for the first busy weekend of the summer.

The \$400 million causeway replaces the old two lane drawbridge with a four lane bridge, in an effort to keep traffic moving in and out of Ocean City during the busy summer months.

So far, motorists who have been over the bridge say they've seen an improvement in traffic flow this weekend.

"I like it, they got rid of the draw bridges. It keeps the flow of traffic going in and out of Ocean City, so it's good all around," said Ben Krainak, a tourist from Lansdale, Pennsylvania.

The causeway also serves as a destination for tourists, with multiple fishing piers, a walking lane, and soon a brand new visitors center will open along the bridge.

---

## **Philly Inquirer - Ocean City NJ bridge is a massive marvel of concrete**

May 28, 2012|By Tom Avril and INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Along with the usual water ice, greasy pizza, and tubes of sunscreen, the unofficial first weekend of summer was marked by a new arrival this year at the Jersey Shore: 175,000 cubic yards of concrete.

It didn't arrive all at once, of course, but the concrete — the Route 52 causeway bridge — is now a finished product and represents a major feat of engineering. The bridge stretches more than two miles from Somers Point on the mainland to the barrier island of Ocean City, able to accommodate 40,000 cars a day.

The construction techniques to erect such a structure have long been standard in the industry, one of them tracing its roots to a historic 1950 overpass in Philadelphia. But the sheer scope of this new bridge, a \$400 million project overseen by the New Jersey Department of Transportation, was unusual.

Start with the concrete, chosen as the primary material since it is less vulnerable to saltwater than steel, said Dave Lambert, the department's director of bridge engineering and infrastructure management. If one were to pile it all up on a football field, the amount of concrete used in the bridge would rise 10 stories high.

The bridge was built because its predecessor, built in 1933, was starting to deteriorate and was sometimes unable to handle traffic on its narrow lanes with no shoulders. The old bridge, now torn down, also was so low that waves would wash over it during heavy storms, rendering it inadequate as an evacuation route. The roadway surface on the new bridge is substantially higher — at its lowest point, more than a foot above the water level in a 100-year flood. But a Rutgers University professor says that still may not be enough in a few decades, given rising sea levels.

The new bridge is supported by a series of stout "piers" — what most people would probably call columns — some of them standing in water and others on small islands in the bay. These piers are supported underneath by concrete piles that were driven as deep as 100 feet into the ground, in some cases by blasting high-pressure water down into hollow channels, or jet ports, located inside the pile.

The spans — the sections of roadway that stretch from pier to pier — are supported by massive concrete girders. A typical one measures 160 feet long, about half the length of a football field, and weighs 220,000 pounds. The girders, or beams, are so big that they had to be brought by barge, 10 at a time, up the coast from the manufacturer in Virginia. There are more than 600 beams in all.

They are made of prestressed concrete, meaning they contain sturdy strands of steel that are pulled taut before the concrete is poured around them. After the concrete hardens, the manufacturer releases the tension on the steel strands, allowing them to contract. This causes a compressive force to be transferred to the surrounding concrete, enabling it to support greater loads.

It's a bit like how you can pick up a row of books by squeezing hard on each end, said William Nickas, managing director for transportation systems at the Precast/Prestressed Concrete Institute, an industry group in Chicago.

This technique makes the new bridge to Ocean City the technological descendant of a historic structure in Philadelphia. The Walnut Lane Memorial Bridge in Fairmount Park, built in 1950, was the first major structure in North America to use prestressed concrete.

In a behind-the-scenes tour of the Ocean City bridge this month, Lambert, the state transportation engineer, showed off the beams and other structural elements to members of the media and the local chapter of the American Society of Highway Engineers. Construction workers were still putting finishing touches on the structure, which at its highest point allows 55 feet of clearance for sailboats.

That's a big improvement over the old causeway, which seemed almost to skim the surface of the water and required two drawbridges to accommodate boats.

"On a bad day, like the Fourth of July, that bridge would go up 20 to 25 times," Lambert recalled.

And in hot weather the steel would expand, sometimes so much that the bridge could not close properly, and firefighters had to be summoned to hose down the broiling metal, he said.

At its lowest point, the new road deck is about 10.8 feet above mean sea level, said Tim Greeley, a transportation department spokesman. The water level in a 100-year flood, meaning a flood that has a 1 percent chance of occurring in a given year, would be 9.6 feet.

Ken Miller, a professor of earth and planetary sciences at Rutgers, said the low point of the bridge will not allow much breathing room by 2050, given that the sea level is steadily rising. On the Jersey Shore, the sea level is rising for two reasons: The land is sinking by a millimeter or two every year, and warmer temperatures are causing the water level to rise.

Some of that is due to melting glaciers and ice sheets, while some is due to the fact that water expands in warmer temperatures. There is a wide range in the sea-level projections made by climate scientists, but Miller said a middle-of-the-road estimate is that the waters will be 1 foot higher by 2050.

"They're not planning for risk," Miller said, when told of the bridge dimensions.

Not so, countered Joe Dee, another transportation department spokesman.

"We're confident that this was designed and engineered appropriately," Dee said. He added that when an especially severe storm is forecast, people in Ocean City and other Shore communities would be evacuated beforehand, as happened last year in advance of Hurricane Irene.

A more immediate concern for most people is likely to be traffic, and on that score the new bridge is an unquestioned improvement. Aside from not having drawbridges, it also features 12-foot-wide lanes, up from 10 feet on the old bridge, and it has 8-foot shoulders to accommodate broken-down cars and emergency responders. The project also includes road improvements on either end.

In addition, the bridge boasts fishing piers, a sidewalk for pedestrians and bicyclists, and a still-to-be-finished visitor center. All in all, a concrete example of modern engineering.



---

**ShoreNewsToday.com**  
**[New Route 52 Bridge is a destination in itself](#)**

Last Updated on Wednesday, 30 May 2012 15:46 Written by Ann Richardson  
Wednesday, 30 May 2012 19:21



The ceremony was so big and so important that, like the bridge it was commemorating, it spanned two communities.

The new Route 52 Bridge and Causeway is open for business, and state officials, some who have spent the better part of two decades working on it, helped the two local mayors, whose communities stand to reap the benefits, cut the ceremonial ribbon on Thursday, May 24. The ceremony began in Somers Point and ended in Ocean City, with officials taking a memorable trip across the bridge in a trolley to mark the occasion.

New Jersey Department of Transportation officials say the new \$500 million project connecting Somers Point and Ocean City is the largest and most expensive construction project ever undertaken by the NJDOT.

Traffic began to flow over four lanes for the first time on Monday, May 14 when state officials took down the ubiquitous orange cones that defined the project for most of the past six years. Traffic that once zigged and zagged from one side to the other as construction continued made its way with ease.

The project replaced two aging drawbridges with two fixed spans and a low-lying, oft-flooded roadway with an elevated causeway. Ninth Street, which flooded with a simple high tide, was elevated a foot and the entrance into town was completely transformed.

The "gateway" project along Ninth Street includes a wide shared-use sidewalk with brick pavers, landscaping and benches.

A new welcome center on nearby Garret's Island should be complete by late August or September. The area is now a recreational destination, with opportunities for fishing and kayaking. Alive with nesting birds, bird watchers will be busy year-round.

Offering panoramic views of the Great Egg Harbor Bay, the new welcome center, named for former Mayor and Freeholder Roy Gillian, is designed to blend with the seashore. Similar to the old Ocean City Yacht Club, it will feature wide, sweeping porches with plenty of rockers to enjoy the calming bay breezes.

The span includes a scenic outlook, fishing pier, boat ramps and parking. Pylons from the old bridge are now secure at the entrance to the shared-use pathway on the south side of the bridge in Ocean City. The Somers Point side will boast the roof of an old gatekeeper's house in a park-like setting.

"It's a once in a lifetime experience," Daniel Lord, an NJDOT engineer told members of the Ocean City Chamber of Commerce earlier this month. He said that it's doubtful, given current economic conditions, that a bridge of this caliber will be built again in our lifetimes.

Lord said there may be some incidental work that could cause lane closures from time-to-time, but for the most part the project was complete.

Lord said the state was pleased that residents and visitors would no longer have to drive over a "dilapidated" bridge nor would they ever have to wait for a bridge opening on a hot, busy summer afternoon.

The new bridge, he hoped, would represent an economic revival for Ocean City.

"You'll drive across something that feels like it's going into a city that's booming," he said.

Project Manager Dave Lambert said he started with the project in 1997.

"It's a tribute to all involved," he said.

Actual planning for the bridge began back in the 1980s, Lambert said. It took years, he noted, for the design to come together.

Former Mayor Henry "Bud" Knight said he did not believe he would see a new bridge completed in his lifetime.

"The state was very cooperative, they got it done. From a business standpoint, there were very, very few delays and inconveniences during this mammoth project," he said.



Taking a trip down memory lane, NJDOT Engineer Sylvester Fryc said the new bridge was needed; the old bridge, he said, with four narrow, 10-foot lanes and no shoulders was a huge safety concern. The state wanted to replace it with something that would better serve as the barrier island's main evacuation route.

The NJDOT raised the profile of Ninth Street to improve flooding, raised the causeway out of the "wave zone," eliminated the traffic circle in Somers Point and improved safety and congestion on both sides of the span.

"They also took into account that it should be a bicycle route," he said, with "amenities" for both communities.

The "touchdown" on Ninth Street was one of the most critical aspects of the project, officials said. Demolition of the old bridge and construction of the new bridge were carefully completed in stages as the new bridge was coming into a narrow area surrounded by existing homes.

Meanwhile, four lanes of traffic needed to continue flowing in the bustling seashore resort during the season.

Eliminating the traffic circle was among the largest considerations, as was widening MacArthur Boulevard in Somers Point and preserving Somers Mansion. Built in 1720, the cultural resource is one of the oldest in New Jersey.

Officials said construction was a challenge. Timing was critical, there were environmental concerns to be mitigated and traffic to be re-routed on a major tourist artery and coastal evacuation route. The removal of the old bascule span was one of the biggest challenges.

The winter of 2010 was severe; causing costs to soar and creating a smaller window of opportunity to complete the span. Construction was completed in time thanks to multiple shifts for several days.

Construction included 14 cranes over two acres, with crews working quickly to place the giant pilings supporting the bridge into the ground.

Coffer dams were used to keep the bay away and large areas completely dry. Pilings were driven to depths of up to 100 feet. The coffer dams were then filled with concrete, to support the 68 giant piers supporting the bridges.

In total, 167 precast concrete girders were utilized. Delivered by a barge, they weigh at least 110 tons each. Over 55,000 yards of concrete was utilized.

Lord said the shared-use path would be open on Monday, May 28, but only from Somers Point to Rainbow Island. Users would not be able to navigate past the welcome center for some time. When complete, the shared-use path will divert around the Welcome Center along the marsh.

The shoulder of the bridges is open to bicycles, he said. There was a lengthy discussion between the DOT and the city, he said and it was decided that a longtime ban on bicycles on the causeway would be lifted. Bicyclists began using the bridge the week of May 14, as soon as the striping was complete.

Some have expressed concern about back-ups at the traffic light in Somers Point. Officials have stressed that the roadway was still in a construction pattern, and once fully-operational, there would be additional lanes that would be used to make right turns, thus facilitating traffic movement.

"What you see now is not a fair judge," said Lord.

A left turn lane has been installed on the causeway for access to the fishing piers, but there will not be a left turn light. Motorists will have to make the turn as traffic permits.

Lord said the project was "truly the largest," the poster child from every aspect of a construction project.

Ocean City Mayor Jay Gillian said NJDOT officials deserve a lot of credit for getting the bridge open on time, with few delays along the way. He said taxpayers deserve a lot of credit, too, for providing the funding.

Gillian said the new bridge will help communities on both sides of the bridge become more prosperous. The new bridge would offer recreation and safe accessibility to the island, he noted.

Gillian said he also wanted to acknowledge the construction workers, who toiled in the worst of conditions to make the bridge a reality.

"What a spectacular job," he said. "Thank you, on behalf of a very proud city. You did an amazing job."

Michele Gillian, executive director of the chamber, said the new bridge shines a new spotlight on the island's bayside.

With two ancient drawbridges and snarled traffic, the dreaded trip across the bay was, on the old span, endured. Now, she said, it will be enjoyed.

"We're really excited," she said.

---

ShoreNewsToday.com

**Bridge opening reconnects Somers Point, Ocean City**

Wednesday, 30 May 2012 12:44

SHAUN SMITH



SOMERS POINT – With scenic views of the Great Egg Harbor Bay, John F. Kennedy Park served as the ideal place to welcome in a new era of the Route 52 causeway.

At a ceremony Thursday, May 24 to officially open the bridge, Mayor Jack Glasser and the city served as host to New Jersey Department of Transportation officials, dignitaries and many of the people who worked on the \$400 million project.

Glasser said the view from the park is enhanced by the new bridge spans and stressed its importance to the region.

"It means so much to Somers Point and all of South Jersey. I really ought to be thankful and I want to be thankful for everyone that either lobbied for it, engineered, planned and especially worked on this great project that made it what it is today," he said.

Glasser specifically thanked the people who worked directly with the city to help smooth over rough patches during the project.

"I want to thank the residents and businesses in Somers Point for being so patient and knowing that the end product will be this great project, and I thank you all," he said.

"As many of you know, I come out here quite often to enjoy this view – and now over my right shoulder you can see through the Ship Channel bridge and in through the Longport bridge the Atlantic Ocean for the first time in many years. So I invite you to come out here some sunny morning and see the sun glistening off the Atlantic Ocean, and you'll know why I'm proud to be the mayor of Somers Point. And I'm so exceptionally thankful this bridge is completed and done."

Glasser said after the event that he sent a letter to the state requesting the Route 52 bridge be named in honor of Master Commandant Richard Somers of the U.S. Navy. He said in the letter that it was only fitting the new bridge be named after the city's favorite son and war hero who learned to sail on the waters the bridge now crosses.

The bridge it replaced was named the Howard S. Stainton Memorial Causeway, built in 1933.

NJDOT Commissioner James Simpson welcomed everyone to the ceremony, which proceeded via trolley across the new bridge to a ribbon cutting ceremony at its foot on the Ocean City side.

"Take a look now what we've built. We've built four bridges, not two. Two large bridges, a highway, two smaller bridges, bike lanes, fishing piers, a two-story tourist facility; this is more than complete streets.

This is like, so much about quality of life and about really appreciating and enjoying the place," Simpson said. "This \$400 million bridge you see behind me is the most expensive bridge the state has ever built."

He said the 2.2-mile span is accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists and noted that bicycling can be the most efficient way to travel in the summertime.

Simpson said he drove over the bridge with his family and it was a beautiful sight. He likened it to flying an airplane.

"You're up maybe 80 feet high, and you start to make your approach to Ocean City on a clear day like

today without fog you can see the ocean. It's just a wonderful, wonderful thing. This will last for generations. This is what transportation projects are all about," said Simpson.

U.S. Rep. Frank A. LoBiondo, a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, said the project is welcome to anyone who has been stuck waiting for the lift bridge to close.

"This is a great example of a partnership that's going to serve the community well," he said.

Ocean City Mayor Jay Gillian said he felt that the city always had input on the project and thanked everyone for the collaboration.

"This bridge is fantastic. I cannot to begin to highlight all of the opportunities for the residents of Ocean City and Somers Point and Cape May and Atlantic counties and all the families that visit our area," Gillian said. "The addition of this bridge and all the features of this project immediately enhance public safety, boating ... ecotourism and recreation."

MacArthur Boulevard in Somers Point has been widened as part of the project. The former Somers Point circle at the foot of the causeway has been eliminated and replaced with a four-way signalized intersection with crosswalks that will link pedestrians and bicyclists to the bridge sidewalk.

The state broke ground on the project in Ocean City in October 2006 with the first, \$145 million phase undertaken by George Harms Construction Company. The second phase began in 2009 in Somers Point by Route 52 Constructors – a joint venture by R.E. Pierson Construction Co. and Wagman Construction Inc. under a \$256 million contract.

Other features including fishing piers, boat ramps, parking lots and the Ocean City Visitors Center are expected to be completed by the end of the year.

---

## **AASTO NEWS JOURNAL 6/1**

### **New Jersey's Route 52 Causeway Ready for Summer Season**



Drivers heading out the to the Jersey Shore this summer should encounter an easier commute thanks to New Jersey's new Route 52 Causeway.

The \$400 million project by the New Jersey Department of Transportation provides a multimodal link for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians between Somers Point in Atlantic County and Ocean City in Cape May County. Officials celebrated restoring the project to full travel capacity (opening all four lanes) last Thursday, signaling a major milestone in the Route 52 Causeway project.

"This is a great way to kick off the summer tourism season, with the new causeway and bridges providing safe and convenient access to this stretch of the Jersey Shore," said NJDOT Commissioner James Simpson in a statement. "Easing travel to popular destinations enables residents and visitors to support local businesses while enjoying New Jersey's natural beauty and recreational opportunities."

The project began its first phase in October 2006 after years of chronic traffic congestion for the roughly 40,000 daily vehicles on the lift bridges in the area during the summer. As part of the project, the lift bridges were replaced with two bridges with 55 feet of vertical clearance, allowing boats to pass without disrupting traffic. NJDOT also built wider foot travel lanes, wider shoulders for disabled and emergency vehicles, and a wider walkway as part of the new causeway.

Some smaller improvements will continue and should be completed by the end of the year. The project was funded through a combination of state and federal funds. More information on the Route 52 Causeway project is available at [bit.ly/njdotroute52](http://bit.ly/njdotroute52).

---

## **Press of AC - Route 52 causeway, three weeks after 4-lane opening, satisfies all**

Posted: Saturday, June 9, 2012 10:30 pm | *Updated: 11:43 pm, Sat Jun 9, 2012.*

By ROB SPAHR, Staff Writer

SOMERS POINT — The Route 52 causeway project loomed over the MacArthur Boulevard corridor for more than a decade.

Would it happen? When would it happen? What would it do to traffic? When would it be finished? Would it even help?

Those were questions asked by many of the city's stakeholders and visiting drivers who regularly fought traffic delays, malfunctioning drawbridges and a pesky traffic circle en route from the Garden State Parkway to the beaches of Ocean City and back again.

Three weeks after all four lanes of the new \$500 million Route 52 causeway opened May 15, the project is already showing it was worth the wait. And even more amenities — including boat ramps, fishing piers, scenic overlooks and a visitor's center — will be added in the coming months.

"Everybody is just thrilled. We've seen less traffic tie-ups and business is good" Mayor Jack Glasser said. "It is an outstanding project already, but I can't wait to see how great it will be when it's done."

Glasser said he plans to walk across the causeway once the pedestrian/bike path is completed

"I've lived here since I was 12 years old, and I've never done that. I think it would be a neat thing to do," he said. "There is so much beauty to see along the way, especially at the top of both bridges, with the views of the Great Egg Harbor Bay, Somers Point and Ocean City. What a great way to link these two beautiful towns."

Sinking Spring, Pa., residents Jennifer and Eric Noecker drive through Somers Point to get their family to Ocean City a few times a year. Saturday was their first since the new causeway opened.

"The old circle was congested and confusing, and it got worse when the construction came," said Jennifer Noecker, 42. "But now it's a much faster and easier trip into Ocean City, because the road is wider and easier to navigate."

And Eric Noecker said that will make vacationing at the shore a little more enjoyable.

"It's definitely nice not have to sit in traffic as long," said Eric Noecker, 29, adding the construction shaved as least 5 minutes off their trip from the parkway to the beach. "But the view from the top of the bridge as you head into Ocean City is also very scenic and a great way to begin your time here."

Even locals who have crossed the causeway multiple times since it opened, such as Northfield resident Kelly Riley, are impressed.

"I like it a lot, it seems to flow much better," said Riley, while on the Ocean City Boardwalk with family Saturday morning. "The traffic has improved, and there are no bridge openings anymore, so you can't beat that."

According to the state Department of Transportation, prior to construction the Route 52 causeway carried an average of 38,400 vehicles per day annually and more than 40,000 vehicles per day during the peak summer months, when the drawbridges would open more than 20 times a day. The new causeway — including the new circle-free intersection at the base of it — is designed to effectively handle an increase of traffic, based on the area's projected growth, through 2030.

"The new causeway has eliminated the two old and sometimes erratic drawbridges at either end of the old structure, replacing them with fixed spans that are high enough above the bay to allow boats to pass underneath without the drawbridge operations which were a constant source of traffic jams in the summer," DOT spokesman Timothy Greeley said via e-mail, adding the new causeway improves "safe and efficient" access between Somers Point and Ocean City.

"The old causeway was not only structurally deficient and deteriorating, but was also much narrower and was borderline unsafe," Greeley said. "This new causeway addresses all of those issues."

Greeley said two lanes of traffic will be maintained between the two towns throughout the summer, but that traffic shifts and some periodic single-lane closures will be necessary at either end of the bridge. The final bridge inspection work is expected to take place over the summer, he said, but that will be performed by using traffic shifts on the causeway and maintaining two lanes in each direction.

The overall construction cost for the project is about \$400 million, which Greeley said was more than 2 percent more than the original bid amount, but \$30 million less than the engineers' design estimates and the next-lowest bidder. That \$400 million price tag does not include another roughly \$100 million in soft costs, such as engineering, land acquisition and permitting costs.

But the project's benefits are more than just traffic-related issues, Greeley said.

"This causeway is an investment in the people who live here, who own businesses here and help grow the New Jersey economy. (It) enhances scenic and historic aspects of Somers Point and Ocean City and preserves the ecological balance of the wetlands and waterways that it spans," Greeley said. "This project is an achievement and a testament to the hardworking individuals who built the bridge and the local residents and officials who cooperated with us while it was being built."

And the once-downtrodden MacArthur Boulevard is already showing signs of life. The new Windjammer Diner Bar and Grill has replaced the abandoned T.G.I. Fridays, while work on a Super Wawa is under-way at the site of two other failed restaurant ventures. And suitors for the final vacant properties along the corridor either already have or are seeking the city approvals they need for construction, Glasser said.

However, Glasser warned that it could be a while before Somers Points reaps all of the potential benefits the project was expected to create.

"It will take some time, with the economy still down and the stock market bouncing back and forth, to see exactly what the impact will be," Glasser said. "I don't know what's going to happen, but as mayor I hope for the best."

But if nothing else, Glasser said, the project has already started to remind people of what Somers Point has to offer.

"Somers Point has different types of personalities — from Route 52, to around Bay Avenue and around Route 9 and around Shore road. But the part people generally saw the most is the part of Route 52 they sat in traffic on while heading from the Garden State Parkway to Ocean City. We want people to know there is more to Somers Point than that, and I think this project will help do that," Glasser said. "It's a place where people come to live and to play. People can live in Somers Point, work in Somers Point and still enjoy all that South Jersey has to offer because we are so close to everything. It's our little part of America and a little part of America that we're really happy with."

---













**CRAB TRAP**

**RESTAURANT**

Fine Food, Wine & Spirits

CONGRATULATIONS  
M.J.D.O.T.  
"JOB WELL DONE"

EFFECTIVE SIGN WORKS 888.588.9057