



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Route 72 Old Causeway Bridge rehabilitation completed and reopened a year ahead of schedule Project improves safety and enhances public space**

**(Trenton)** – New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) Commissioner Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti today announced the completion and reopening of the Route 72 Old Causeway Bridge a year ahead of schedule following the complete rehabilitation of the structure.

“The Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges project is an excellent example of how the New Jersey Department of Transportation and our contractors deliver projects that improve safety and positively benefit our communities, while working creatively and collaboratively,” NJDOT Commissioner Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti said. “Today we are celebrating the completion and full reopening of the Route 72 Old Causeway Bridge before the busy summer season and a year ahead of schedule.”

This work is part of one of the most significant projects the Department has, not only in South Jersey, but the entire state. The 3-mile long causeway links Stafford on the mainland with Ship Bottom on Long Beach Island. Work on the [\\$319 million federally-funded Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges project](#) began in 2013 and is expected to continue through 2022. It is being advanced through a series of five contracts. Today’s ribbon cutting marks the ceremonial completion of Contract 4.

As part of the total project, a new bridge previously was constructed parallel to the existing Old Causeway Bridge as part of Contract 2. Having two bridges provides the safety of a redundant route on or off the island. The new bridge has carried two lanes of traffic in each direction since 2016 when it opened.

### **Building Sequence Maintained All Lanes During the Summer**

This sequence of building the new bridge before rehabbing the existing bridge was designed to preserve the two travel lanes in each direction during the busy summer seasons from mid-May to mid-September.

NJDOT’s contractor on the Old Causeway Bridge rehabilitation, George Harms Construction Co., used an innovative approach to reconstructing the bridge that allowed the work to be completed more quickly than originally expected. Instead of building trestle bridges to support construction equipment during construction, Harms utilized barges. This technique saved time, money, and resulted in reopening the bridge a year early.

Opening all of the bridges in their final lane configuration before the 2019 summer season was made possible because NJDOT's contractor for building the new bridge, Schiavone Construction Co., completed the new structure on time, which allowed the rehabilitation of the Old Causeway Bridge to begin on schedule.

Now that the Old Causeway Bridge is reopened, it carries two lanes of traffic westbound with shoulders on either side. The six-foot sidewalk providing a link between Stafford and Ship Bottom for pedestrians for the first time will be completed later this summer. The new bridge, completed in 2016, now will carry two lanes of traffic eastbound with shoulders on both sides.

The distinctive "String of Pearls" lighting that adorned the original bridge, which was innovative in the 1950s when it was designed, became difficult to maintain and is no longer the best way to light the roadway. Understanding the iconic aesthetic the lights provided, new lighting elements have been added on the sides of the bridges to preserve the String of Pearls look and a new, modern lighting system using LED technology has been added to provide roadway lighting. The new lights provide better lighting, are more energy efficient, and require less maintenance.

### **Additional Benefits to the Community**

In addition to the main causeway bridges, three trestle bridges – Hilliards Thorofare, East Thorofare, and West Thorofare – underwent major rehabilitation work. The lanes were reconfigured to improve traffic flow and to provide pedestrian and bicycle access across the bridges for the first time.

In addition, and as part of an environmental mitigation project, NJDOT and USFWS created an environmental trail that opened last summer providing the first public access to the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge on Cedar Bonnet Island. NJDOT worked closely with the USFWS and other stakeholders on the [\\$9.6 million federal and state funded environmental mitigation work on Cedar Bonnet Island](#). The work performed included wetlands creation, mitigation for existing freshwater wetlands, and modification of two existing storm water basins within the Barnegat Bay watershed.

Other public access accommodations that are part of this project include new parking lots and enhanced fishing and recreation areas. These areas have lower railings in some places to make it easier for those with disabilities to fish.

The next major piece of the project, expected to begin in 2020, will address safety and operational issues at the Route 72/Marsha Drive intersection in Stafford Township, and operational and drainage improvements in Ship Bottom on Long Beach Island. Two-way traffic will be restored along Central Avenue and Long Beach Boulevard, and traffic signals along 8th and 9th Streets (Route 72) will be improved. For more information, visit NJDOT's [project-specific website](#).

Motorists are encouraged to check NJDOT's traffic information website [www.511nj.org](http://www.511nj.org) for real-time travel information, and for NJDOT news follow us on Twitter at [@NJDOT\\_info](https://twitter.com/NJDOT_info) and on our [Facebook page](#).

**Please note, the NJDOT Communications office has a new phone number – 609.963.1975**

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