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Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno Participates in Groundbreaking to Mark the End of Traffic Signals on the Garden State Parkway

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Tags: [Transportation](#)

Trenton, NJ – Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno, New Jersey Department of Transportation Commissioner (DOT) James Simpson, Congressman Frank LoBiondo and other elected officials participated in a groundbreaking ceremony today to mark the start of construction on a project that will improve safety by removing three traffic lights at Garden State Parkway interchanges in Cape May County — the only three traffic signals on the 172-mile length of the toll road.

"Traffic lights have no place on a busy highway like the Garden State Parkway, and there has been nearly unanimous agreement that the lights at these three Cape May County intersections near the southern end of the Parkway need to go," said Lt. Governor Guadagno. "By finally making this project a reality, we will save lives. We will make the Parkway and the local roads safer and less congested for the people who live and work in Cape May County and for the citizens of New Jersey and all those who depend on these roads to get safely to their favorite Shore towns."

The groundbreaking ceremony was held at the intersection of the Garden State Parkway and Crest Haven Road in Middle Township with the traffic light at Interchange 11 as a backdrop. After a program of speeches, ceremonial shovels of dirt were turned to mark the beginning of the construction phase of the project.

The project will replace the traffic signals at three at-grade intersections with full interchanges. Bridges will be built to carry the Parkway over Shell Bay Avenue (Interchange 9), Stone Harbor Boulevard (Interchange 10) and Crest Haven Road (Interchange 11). Ramps will provide continued full access between the Parkway and the local roads at all three interchanges. Drivers on the Garden State Parkway will no longer have to stop to let local traffic pass, and drivers on the local roads will no longer have to wait at a busy intersection to get to the other side of the Parkway.

"Three people have died in crashes at these traffic lights just since the preliminary design for this project began in 2004," said DOT Commissioner and Turnpike Authority Chairman James Simpson. "It's time to get this project done and get those traffic lights out of there. When a problem with a wetlands mitigation site last year looked like it might delay construction, we promised to do whatever we had to be in a position to award the contract in December and get the work underway by early this year. I'm happy to say we were able to do that."

The traffic lights have been in place since before there even was a Garden State Parkway. They were installed when the former New Jersey Highway Department built a bypass around Cape May Courthouse in the 1940s. They remained after the bypass was incorporated into the Parkway when the toll road opened in 1954.

The New Jersey Turnpike Authority, which operates the Parkway, awarded a construction contract to the Richard E. Pierson Construction Co. of Pilesgrove, NJ, in December. Pierson was the lowest of four bidders. The total cost of the project is \$110 million, about \$15 million less than originally projected. The project is being paid for with \$32 million in federal funding secured by Congressman LoBiondo and \$78 million from the Turnpike Authority's 10-year capital program.

Construction is expected to take about two years. The first steps will be to relocate utilities and to construct a temporary diversionary road parallel to the northbound Parkway. The diversionary road, which is expected to be completed in about three months, will carry Parkway traffic while the overpasses are being constructed.

The New Jersey No Net Loss Reforestation Act requires state agencies to replace any trees removed during a construction project. About 26 forested acres will be impacted by the construction of the improvements at Interchanges 9, 10 and 11. There is enough room in the vicinity of the project to plant new trees on about 20 acres. In addition to planting those trees, the Turnpike Authority will pay \$382,500 to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to plant and maintain trees on an additional 6.25 acres of public land away from the project area.

The project will also impact 4.62 acres of freshwater wetlands and 2.37 acres of tidal wetlands. To compensate for those impacts, the Turnpike Authority will spend \$5 million to restore, preserve or enhance more than 38 acres of wetlands in Cape May County and to buy credits in a wetlands mitigation bank.

"This important project is one of several major capital investments the Turnpike Authority is making on the Garden State Parkway in South Jersey," said Turnpike Authority Executive Director Ronnie Hakim. "The Authority is spending nearly \$700 million, or about 10 percent of its capital program budget, just on projects in Cape May and Atlantic Counties. That work is creating jobs, relieving congestion and making the Parkway safer."

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Other Garden State Parkway projects underway or about to begin include widening the road by one lane in each direction between Egg Harbor Township and Toms River; making major improvements to the Bass River, Mullica River, Patcong Creek, Great Egg Harbor and Drag Channel bridges; removing the Beesley's Point Bridge; replacing the Bass River State Police barracks; and building complete interchanges at mileposts 41 and 44 in Galloway Township, Atlantic County.

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