

## Office of the Governor

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### NEWS RELEASE

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#### **GOVERNOR BREAKS GROUND FOR ATLANTIC CITY TUNNEL; CITES ECONOMIC BENEFITS AND TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENTS FROM PROJECT**

Gov. Christie Whitman today broke ground for the Atlantic City-Brigantine Connector that will improve the traffic flow in Atlantic City and create thousands of jobs. The Connector will link the Atlantic City Expressway with the city's Marina District and improve the traffic flow from Atlantic City to Brigantine.

"This project will ensure vastly improved cross-town connections," the Governor said. "Visitors to Atlantic City Convention Center and Brigantine will find a far easier route with less congestion. And, at last, there will be direct access from the Atlantic City Expressway to Route 30."

"This project will keep Atlantic City - once written off as a doomed resort town as desolate as Mars - on the road to prosperity," she said. "It will not only improve traffic circulation, but also create thousands of jobs, attract private sector investment in this city. Overall, the public-private investment of this project will mean more than \$2 billion in private funds invested in Atlantic City."

"This city will be a lot richer from the jobs created through the construction of this tunnel and new casinos," Gov. Whitman said.

The Atlantic City-Brigantine Connector project is expected to create more than 6,000 construction and construction-related jobs and generate another 3,500 jobs for the New Jersey economy. Three new casinos scheduled to be built on the H tract in the Marina District as a result of the Atlantic City-Brigantine Connector project will generate almost 47,000 jobs, with an additional 30,000 jobs created for New Jersey's economy.

The project is also expected to create 16,500 permanent jobs. Mirage Resorts, which is scheduled to build the Le Jardin hotel and casino on the H-Tract, has committed to providing 30 percent of the 7,200 jobs to be created at its new casino to the unemployed and underemployed in Atlantic City.

The three new casinos will increase the number of hotel rooms in Atlantic City from 5,500 to 7,000 rooms.

In addition, the additional yearly tax revenues will mean an additional \$95 million per year for the Casino Revenue Fund, which funds vital services including the Pharmaceutical Assistance for the Aged and Disabled program (PAAD) and Lifeline programs for seniors.

The Connector will link directly by ramps to the Atlantic City Expressway, providing direct access from the Expressway and the Marina District to the Atlantic City Convention Center. About one-third of a mile of the Connector will be constructed as a covered roadway to minimize the impact on the neighborhood on the west side of Atlantic City which the Connector will traverse.

A feature of the project will be a 5.5-acre community park, which will be developed on top of the covered roadway, to provide waterfront recreation for residents along the Penrose Canal.

The Connector also will provide long-needed traffic and emergency vehicle relief from the City of Brigantine by providing Brigantine with a seamless connection to Atlantic City and the regional highway system that links the two island communities to the mainland.

The \$330 million Connector is a private/public partnership between the state through the Department of Transportation and the South Jersey Transportation Authority, and Mirage Resorts. The cost includes a \$110 million contribution by Mirage Resorts with the remaining \$220 million private from public sources,

including \$95 million from the New Jersey Transportation Trust Fund and \$60 million from the South Jersey Transportation Authority. A total of \$65 million of the project's cost will be borne through H-tract parking fees to be paid by H-tract users.

The project is being constructed by Yonkers Contracting Company, Inc., of Yonkers, N. Y., which was awarded the low bid of \$190.6 million for the job in August, 1997. Other costs involve right-of-way acquisition, design, engineering, permitting, program management, administration, community relations and additional professional services. Construction is scheduled to take 30 months, with the roadway opening in May, 2001.