

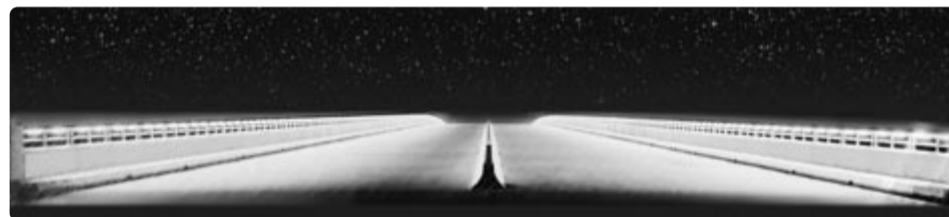
Overview

The Route 72 Causeway in Ocean County, New Jersey connects Long Beach Island with the mainland, carrying traffic over the Intracoastal Waterway on the Manahawkin Bay Bridge and three trestle bridges. It is [located](#) in Stafford Township and Ship Bottom Borough. Major [improvements](#) are needed to maintain this vital lifeline for Long Beach Island residents and visitors. The Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges Project involves the construction of a new structure parallel to and south of the existing Manahawkin Bay Bridge, rehabilitation of the existing Manahawkin Bay Bridge, and the rehabilitation of three trestle bridges over Hilliards Thorofare, East Thorofare, and West Thorofare. Other planned improvements include:

- A six-foot sidewalk on the westbound (north) side of Route 72, with connections to communities and points of interest on the south side of the roadway;
- Bicycle accommodations, including wider outside shoulders on the twin Manahawkin Bay Bridges and six-foot bike lanes on the trestle bridges;
- Improvements to the intersection of Route 72 and Marsha Drive in Stafford Township to alleviate seasonal traffic delays; and
- Intersection improvements in Ship Bottom, designed to improve traffic flow for both north/south traffic on Long Beach Island and along 8th and 9th Streets, and drainage improvements to improve access during heavy rainfalls and high tides.
- Environmental mitigations including wetland creation, mitigation for freshwater wetlands and retrofit of two existing stormwater basins within the Barnegat Bay watershed and public access improvements.



Initially a Feasibility Assessment was completed in 2007 to evaluate a variety of alternatives. During the Preliminary Design Phase, an [Environmental Assessment \(EA\)](#) was prepared for this project and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has approved a [Finding Of No Significant Impact \(FONSI\)](#) (pdf 683k). The project has avoided environmental impacts to the maximum extent practicable, however, some mitigation will still be required. A mitigation plan was developed in coordination with regulatory agencies during the permitting phase of the project. The project also provides opportunities for the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) to improve public access to the waterfront, including areas for fishing and crabbing. The "String of Pearls" lighting formerly seen on the existing Manahawkin Bay Bridge at night will be replicated on the outside of both the existing and new Manahawkin Bay Bridges using current technology to improve reliability, but these lights will not be visible from the roadway. Highway lighting poles utilizing Light Emitting Diode (LED) technology have been provided to light the roadway.



The "String of Pearls" lighting as it once looked on the Manahawkin Bay Bridge.

The project is currently in [Construction Phase](#). The New Manahawkin Bay Bridge construction contract was awarded on April 24, 2013 with construction activities beginning May 3, 2013 and completed in July 2016. Rehabilitation of the trestle bridges began on February 7, 2015 and was completed on October 2, 2019. Rehabilitation of the existing Manahawkin Bay Bridge began in November, 2016 and was substantially complete in November 2019.

The wildlife refuge completed construction in October of 2017. Construction for the traffic, drainage and pedestrian improvements in Ship Bottom are anticipated to begin in February 2021. This contract was awarded in November 2020 and anticipated to be completed in December 2024.





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