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Acting Governor Kim Guadagno Announces \$350 Million in Major Improvement Work to Begin on Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Causeway

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Twin-Bridge Design is Consistent with Guiding Principles of Rebuilding in Wake of Superstorm Sandy

Trenton, NJ – Continuing the Christie Administration's commitment to rebuilding in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, Acting Governor Kim Guadagno and Department of Transportation (DOT) Commissioner James Simpson today announced that the construction phase of the \$350 million Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Causeway project will soon begin to repair damage and create a safer and stronger route for residents and visitors. The 53-year-old causeway that links the mainland to Long Beach Island in Ocean County sustained relatively minor damage during the storm, remaining open at all times. Acting Governor Guadagno noted that the project design is consistent with the Administration's goal to rebuild storm-damaged infrastructure in a manner that helps it to better withstand the forces of violent storms.

"The Manahawkin Bay Causeway project exemplifies what we are aiming for when it comes to rebuilding in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy – moving quickly to restore what was lost and to do so in a manner that will be stronger, more lasting, and better serve our residents," said Acting Governor Guadagno. "Our objective throughout the state is to not merely replace what was damaged, but to build it better and stronger. That can mean a different design, construction method or some other element that builds in resiliency, protects our investments and preserves mobility and public safety."

The first of four major construction contracts will be advertised for bids tomorrow, with construction starting this spring. Completion is scheduled for 2020.

The centerpiece of the project involves the construction of a new bridge parallel to the existing one over Manahawkin Bay, providing the safety of a redundant route on or off the island in the event that one of the spans needs to be closed.

The existing bay bridge, which is the most prominent feature along the causeway, is structurally deficient and functionally obsolete. It will be closed to traffic and rehabilitated once the new bridge is built and opened to traffic. This sequence will preserve the current two travel lanes in each direction during busy summer seasons.

The increased safety of a redundant structure is one of many improvements that have been designed into the project. Complete Streets elements, including wide shoulders and a barrier-protected sidewalk along the twin spans, will provide safe access for pedestrians and bicyclists from Stafford to Ship Bottom. Currently there is no safe access for pedestrians or bicyclists on the main bridge and other portions of the causeway.

"Long Beach Island is an iconic Jersey Shore vacation destination that brings enjoyment to hundreds of thousands of residents and visitors every summer," said NJDOT Commissioner Jim Simpson. "Our investment in this project will strengthen the causeway's critical role as the only Coastal Evacuation Route for Long Beach Island. It will enhance safe and convenient access not just for motorists, but for all users of the roadway."

Commissioner Simpson noted that other amenities will provide recreational opportunities along the causeway, which touches down on four small islands – Mallard Island, an unnamed man-made island, Bonnet Island and Cedar Bonnet Island – between Stafford and Ship Bottom. Six parking lots will be built along the causeway, providing access for walking, fishing or crabbing. The project also calls for improvements to the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge on Bonnet Island.

Three Dynamic Message Signs will be installed to provide motorists with traffic and other information near the Garden State Parkway and Route 9 in Stafford and in Ship Bottom on Long Beach Island.

Project details

The project will make improvements along a 3-mile stretch of Route 72 from a point west of Marsh Drive in Stafford to Long Beach Boulevard in Ship Bottom. Work will be carried out through four construction contracts.

The twin Manahawkin Bay bridges will offer motorists two 12-foot-wide travel lanes in each direction, as well as 12-

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foot-wide inside shoulders and 13-foot-wide outside shoulders that will provide safe travel lanes for bicyclists. A six-foot-wide sidewalk will be built alongside the outside shoulder of the bridge that will carry westbound traffic.

Rehabilitation of the three trestle bridges will result in two 11-foot-wide travel lanes in each direction, as well as 1-foot-wide inside shoulders and 6-foot-wide outside shoulders to accommodate bicyclists. The westbound lanes will also offer a six-foot-wide sidewalk. Currently there are no accommodations for pedestrians or bicyclists on these bridges.

A separate environmental mitigation contract will be carried out concurrent to the construction contracts and will improve public access to the water and will improve the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge.

The first contract includes building a new high level structure parallel to the existing Manahawkin Bay Bridge, along with various associated improvements to the bridge approaches and surrounding area.

The second contract includes rehabilitating two of the three trestle bridges that are part of the causeway. They are located to the east of the Bay Bridge and span narrow sections of the bay known as East Thorofare and West Thorofare. Work on the trestle bridges will be minimized during the busy summer seasons to maintain traffic flow.

The third contract includes work to rehabilitate the existing Manahawkin Bay Bridge with the entire existing superstructure scheduled to be removed and replaced. This work is more extensive than previously planned. Originally only the bridge deck was to be replaced. This contract will also include rehabilitating the third trestle bridge located to the west of the Bay Bridge over Hilliard's Thorofare.

The fourth contract will address safety and operational issues at the Route 72/Marsha Drive Intersection in Stafford Township to improve traffic flow at the traffic signal, and along 8th Street and 9th Street (Route 72) in Ship Bottom to provide operational upgrades and drainage improvements.

Project information is available online at www.nj.gov/transportation. Click on "In the Works" and select "Our Projects & the Environment" from the drop-down menu. Select "Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges Project."

The precise timing of the work is subject to change due to weather or other factors. Motorists are encouraged to check NJDOT's traffic information website www.511nj.org for real-time travel information.

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