

# **Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges FAQ**

## **What is the status of the various contracts on this project?**

The NJDOT is constructing this project through six construction contracts. The NJDOT has already reconstructed four Route 72 bridges and built one new bridge across Manahawkin Bay as part of the Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges Project. Contracts 2 through 5 are complete and in service, providing improved travel between Long Beach Island (LBI) and the mainland over the waters of Manahawkin Bay. The NJDOT has also completed the construction of environmental mitigations required for the entire project as part of Contract 5. The NJDOT is actively monitoring the subaquatic vegetation in the Manahawkin Bay. This effort will continue through 2023. The NJDOT will be completing the intersection improvements, drainage improvements and pedestrian accessibility improvements in Stafford Township and the Borough of Ship Bottom as part of Contract 1A and 1B, which is the last construction contract under the Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges project.

## **What traffic improvements are proposed in Ship Bottom?**

Approximately 3,000 feet of Route 72 (8th and 9th Streets) and three crossroads (Barnegat Avenue, Central Avenue and Long Beach Boulevard) will be widened in Ship Bottom under Contract 1B. Restoring two-way traffic along Long Beach Boulevard between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Streets and Central Avenue between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets at the request of local officials will improve traffic flow. The five existing crossroad traffic signals will be upgraded along with a new traffic signal at Long Beach Boulevard and 8<sup>th</sup> Street that will be connected with fiber optic communications to NJDOT Traffic Operations South in Cherry Hill New Jersey for improved traffic operations. Widening Barnegat Avenue northbound will provide an additional dedicated left turn lane at 8th Street to facilitate traffic exiting LBI. The existing east to west U-turn at the west end of Route 72 in Ship Bottom (eliminated in Contract 3) will be re-established for emergency vehicle U-turns only, to improve emergency response time. Improved roadway signing, highway lighting and Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) improvements will be installed as part of this project.

## **What pedestrian and bicycle improvements are proposed in Ship Bottom?**

Before the Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges Project, there was no sidewalk along the Route 72 Causeway, although some mainland residents cautiously walked or biked along Route 72 on small safetywalks on the bridges to get to LBI. Proposed bike and pedestrian improvements linking the mainland with LBI will improve safety. The bike/pedestrian improvements have already been installed along the Route 72 Causeway in Contracts 2 through 5. The continuous sidewalk provides access to the improvements at the Edwin Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (restored in Contract 5) and the waterfront access improvements that have been installed along Route 72 Causeway at several locations.

New sidewalks will be installed along all impacted Ship Bottom roadways. Ship Bottom sidewalks will be connected to a sidewalk installed along the Route 72 Causeway thus completing a continuous pedestrian connectivity plan from Stafford Township on the mainland to Ship Bottom. The project will install ADA accessible ramps and accessible pedestrian traffic signals which will meet or exceed Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. Shoulders, wide lanes and traffic signals will accommodate the needs of bicyclists.

### **What drainage improvements are proposed in Ship Bottom?**

The existing Ship Bottom roadway drainage system within the projects limits consists of a series of inlets and pipes that discharge into Manahawkin Bay through a single 24-inch outlet pipe located just north of the East Thorofare bridge. The estimated capacity of this existing system is less than a one year storm event, which contributes to ponding along 8th and 9th Streets. One goal of the improvements to the Ship Bottom portion of the project is to improve the drainage system along 8th and 9th Streets during heavy rainfall and high tides which will maintain access/egress to the newly improved infrastructure and maintain an evacuation route over the Manahawkin Bay.

To reduce flooding, a new storm drainage system with over 300 inlets and two new 3,000 linear foot drainage trunk lines along 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Street will be installed. These trunk lines will empty into Manahawkin Bay through two new pile supported outfalls, one 60-inch outfall pipe to the north of the East Thorofare Bridge and one 48-inch outfall pipe to the south. In addition, tide-flex valves will be installed to limit the tidal influence on the drainage system. This new storm drainage system can accommodate a five-year storm event along 8th and 9th Streets and will reduce frequent intersection flooding.

### **How will the traffic be maintained during construction in Ship Bottom?**

Operational and safety improvements in Ship Bottom will be constructed in three main construction stages. Traffic will be maintained along Route 72 and local roadways during construction. The 8<sup>th</sup> Street access roadway will maintain traffic to the businesses during all construction staging. Traffic signals and roadway signing will be adjusted to accommodate the needs of traffic during staged construction as no traffic detour is possible.

8<sup>th</sup> Street (westbound Route 72) will maintain two travel lanes during Stages 1 and 3 during the summer peak seasons, with one lane maintained in Stage 2 during the non-summer season.

Similar as with 8<sup>th</sup> Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Street (eastbound Route 72) will maintain two travel lanes during Stages 1 and 3 during the summer peak seasons, with one lane maintained in Stage 2 during the non-summer season.

During weekday/weekend peak hours, all travel lanes of traffic will be maintained during the LBI summer tourist season (Mid-May through Mid-September) during construction. During the off-peak season (Mid-September through Mid-May), Route 72 may be reduced to one undivided 13.5 foot travel lane in each direction as needed which can also be used for construction equipment within an allowable travel lane closure schedule.

## **What utilities will be affected by construction and will utilities be maintained during construction?**

The following companies have facilities within the project limits that will be impacted by the proposed design:

1. Atlantic City Electric relocations includes utility poles, overhead electric and fiber optic facilities, installation of new manholes, existing manhole adjustments and installation of a new underground electric system.
2. Comcast relocations includes overhead facilities attaching to new utility poles installed by Atlantic City Electric.
3. New Jersey Natural Gas includes adjustments of existing gas valves and installation of new gas main.
4. Ship Bottom Municipal Utility Authority water and sanitary sewer facilities are being installed by the Borough as a separate project that is being coordinated with the Route 72 project.
5. Verizon relocations includes overhead facilities attaching to new utility poles and installation of a new underground cabling system.

Utility service to Long Beach Island will be maintained during the utility relocations and project construction.

## **How can I stay informed or offer suggestions?**

A comprehensive community involvement program has been implemented to keep the community informed about the project and construction. As construction continues, the outreach program will remain active to alert residents and motorists of the pending construction. The New Jersey Department of Transportation has a website dedicated to the Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges project which includes information about the design, construction, schedule and provides updates in the “What’s New” section.