

November 9, 2020

Governor Cuomo Announces New Efforts to Increase Highway Safety and Prevent Low-Bridge Strikes by Trucks

\$3.8 Million Bridge Replacement in Albany County Includes Safety Upgrades Such as Higher Clearance for Highway Traffic and Widened Bridge Shoulders

Project Completed Within Budget and One Month Ahead of Schedule

Governor Also Launches Enforcement and Education Campaign to Prevent Trucks From Striking Low Bridges

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced the completion of the \$3.8 million bridge replacement project of the Old State Road Bridge over the NYS Thruway (I-90) in Albany County. The project, which began in March, was completed within budget and a month ahead of schedule for the approximately 5,300 vehicles which utilize the Old State Road Bridge each day. Since 2016, the Thruway Authority's capital program has supported the replacement or rehabilitation of 133 bridges across its 570-mile system.

Additionally, to prevent future bridge strikes, the Governor directed the New York State Police, the New York State Department of Transportation, and the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee to launch a collaborative enforcement and education effort that will take place from Monday, November 9, through Sunday, November 15. New York State averages about 220 bridge strikes per year, resulting in the potential for injury for the truck driver and nearby motorists, costly repairs to the bridge itself, and substantial traffic disruptions. There have been more than 1,100 bridge strikes on New York roadways since 2015.

"While maintaining strong, safe transportation infrastructure is critical for keeping our roadways safe, it's also an important piece in growing local economies and this is why New York has made the strengthening of bridges and roadways a top priority,"

Governor Cuomo said. "Not only does the new Old State Road Bridge improve the safety and reliability of the Thruway, but by increasing its clearance, we are helping prevent troublesome traffic delays which impact travel and commerce. When you combine this progress along with our new enforcement and education initiative, New York is taking a proactive approach towards improving safety for all those who travel our roads."

The overpass bridge, located between Exit 24 (Albany - I-87) and Exit 25 (Schenectady - I-890), had been subject to numerous over-height truck hits throughout the past several years causing traffic disruptions on the Thruway mainline. The new bridge height will prevent similar incidents in the future with an increased clearance of 16 feet, 6 inches for traffic traveling on the NYS Thruway (I-90).

The bridge was constructed using 260,000 pounds of American-made structural steel and its new driving surface and approaches utilized 1,000 cubic yards of concrete, as

well as 1,000 tons of asphalt. To further strengthen safety, wider travel lanes and shoulders, and new safety guiderails were implemented.

Senator George A. Amedore, Jr. said, "Investing in our outdated infrastructure is so important, and I'm glad to see the completion of the Old State Road Thruway Bridge replacement project that will provide a safer travel experience for residents and visitors."

Assemblymember Patricia Fahy said, "Over 5,300 cars and local residents pass over this bridge to and from their daily activities and work. I thank the New York State Thruway Authority for their work on replacing what was a deteriorating and unsafe structure, and for providing my office and the community with regular updates on the project itself and for working to maintain our local transportation infrastructure."

Daniel P. McCoy, Albany County Executive "When you ask New Yorkers which issues they care about most, infrastructure and transportation are likely to make it on the list. Our residents deserve to be able to get to work, school, daycare and everywhere else each day with peace of mind, and Governor Cuomo gets that. "I'm proud Albany County can support his efforts to continually improve our bridges and roads, including with this \$3.8 million replacement project that made our bridge safer and even used American-made steel."

Andrew C. Joyce, Chairman, Albany County Legislature "Infrastructure investments are one of the most essential functions of government - and the Old State Bridge project is an example of using toll revenue responsibly. Thank you to the Thruway Authority for this upgrade that improves safety for motorists and pedestrians while maintaining an essential channel between our communities."

Peter G. Barber, Supervisor, Town of Guilderland, said, "I thank the Thruway Authority and its contractor for completing the replacement of the Old State Road bridge, with a steel structure made in the USA. The new bridge promotes pedestrian and bicycle safety with widened shoulders, and provides a connection to the Albany Pine Bush Preserve."

As part of the enforcement effort, State Troopers will focus active patrols in areas in each Troop where there have been documented bridge strikes by large commercial vehicles. These bridge strikes are most likely to occur on roadways with low railroad bridges, and on New York State Parkways. Commercial trucks are banned on parkways, but operators guided by consumer-grade GPS devices can end up on parkways, and when that occurs a bridge strike is inevitable. Consumer GPS devices do not include information about low bridges, truck drivers are required to instead use commercial-grade GPS systems which provide details about low bridges and restricted routes.

In addition to increased enforcement, a tip card and other materials were developed to educate drivers - especially drivers of box trucks and other commercial vehicles - about the hazards of low bridges and how to avoid them. The educational materials will be

made available to the public at highway rest areas, Department of Motor Vehicles Offices and truck rental facilities. They warn operators of commercial vehicles that they are prohibited from New York State parkways because of low bridges; stress the need to be aware of signs and pavement markings and urge the use commercial GPS systems that account for height restrictions. Traditional phone map systems or GPS units do not account for low bridges.

State Police Superintendent Keith M. Corlett said, "Bridge strikes continue to be a problem across the state, endangering the safety of motorists, disrupting traffic and causing damage. These targeted patrols are part of an effort with our partners at DOT and the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee to raise awareness about this issue and reduce and eventually eliminate bridge strikes statewide."

Thruway Authority Executive Director Matthew J. Driscoll said. "The Thruway Authority is committed to reinvesting toll dollars into essential projects, like the Old State Road Bridge replacement, to provide a dependable roadway that can be traveled on for generations to come. Now that it is complete, the new bridge will enhance safety on Old State Road and the Thruway mainline below."

Department of Transportation Commissioner Marie Therese Dominguez said, "Bridge strikes pose a danger to everyone who uses our highways and they cause unnecessary delays to countless numbers drivers who get stuck in traffic because of them. The Department of Transportation is proud to join with the State Police and our other partners in government in this important initiative that will hopefully keep trucks off roads where they don't belong and make our highways safer for everyone."

DMV Commissioner and Chair of the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee Mark J.F. Schroeder, said, "Bridge strikes not only tie up traffic and damage vehicles, but they can also compromise the safety of our infrastructure. We support the efforts of our partners in law enforcement and at DOT and are committed to educating drivers about how to safely navigate New York's bridges and tunnels."

Since 2013, the New York State Department of Transportation has participated in a regional Bridge Strike Task Force in the Hudson Valley. Because of this multi-agency effort, NYSDOT added new signage and pavement markings along the Hutchinson River, Saw Mill River, Cross County and Sprain Brook parkways and ramp entrances. Over-height vehicle detection systems have been installed at multiple locations across New York State.

New fines and penalties for those driving commercial vehicles on New York State parkways went into effect September 3, 2020. Penalties for commercial vehicles on parkways are broken down by weight class, and there are also penalties for over-height vehicles. The maximum fines and penalties are as follows:

Less than 10,000 pounds:

- First violation - \$250 and/or 15 days in jail
- Second violation within 18 months - \$500 and/or 45 days in jail
- Third or subsequent violation within 18 months - \$750 and/or 90 days in jail

Between 10,000 and 26,000 pounds:

- First violation - \$350 and/or 15 days in jail
- Second violation within 18 months - \$700 and/or 45 days in jail
- Third or subsequent violation within 18 months - \$1,000 and/or 90 days

Over 26,000 pounds:

- First violation - \$700 and/or 15 days in jail
- Second violation within 18 months - \$1,500 and/or 45 days in jail
- Third or subsequent violation within 18 months - \$2,000 and/or 90 days in jail

New fines and penalties for over height vehicles are as follows:

- First offense - \$1,000 and/or 30 days in jail

Second or subsequent offense - \$2,000 and/or 60 days in jail