



MTA Press Releases

[Select Language](#) | ▼

Press Release

April 28, 2009

[Bridges & Tunnels](#)

IMMEDIATE

Bronx-Whitestone Bridge Marks 70 Years As Critical NYC Crossing

"The finest suspension bridge of them all," proclaimed Robert Moses during opening day ceremonies for the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge on April 29, 1939. Seven decades later the bridge still cuts a graceful figure across the East River as it links the Bronx to Queens and Long Island beyond.

The bridge was completed with remarkable speed in only 22 months and functioned as a gateway to Long Island, where suburbs were being populated with young families in the years during and after World War II. The official opening of the span was also timed to coincide with the start, one day later, of the 1939-1940 New York World's Fair in Flushing Meadows Corona Park. At the ceremony near the Bronx plaza Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia addressed a crowd of dignitaries, pointing to the sleek towers of the bridge and proclaiming it a symbol of democracy. The 2,300-foot long, 74-foot wide suspension span was the fourth longest in the world at the time.

"Our bridge occupies an especially noteworthy place in New York City history," said MTA Bridges and Tunnels President Susan Kupferman. "Our customers are an important part of that story—past, present and future. In the first year of operation, 6 million vehicles used the bridge; in 2008 there were 43 million crossings. And through the years, our bridge employees have been dedicated to ensuring safe and courteous travel for all."

Every day there are approximately 120,000 customers who rely on the Bronx-Whitestone's easy access to Queens and Long Island or the Bronx and points north.

"I am proud of how we serve our customers and operate this bridge," said Raymond Webb, Bronx-Whitestone General Manager, who is also well known to communities on both sides of the bridge. "I make it my business to let our neighbors in Queens and the Bronx know I'm available to hear any concerns they may have—they know me and like to stay in touch, often just to say hello."

The Bronx-Whitestone was originally designed by master engineer Othmar H. Ammann and his associate Allston Dana as a four-lane bridge. In order to improve the stability of the bridge and guard against high winds, stiffening trusses were added to the edges of the deck in 1946; the original walkway was removed and the roadway widened to six lanes, three in each direction.

In an effort to lighten the load on the bridge and extend its life for decades to come, in 2004, the heavy trusses were removed and lightweight V-shaped wind fairings were installed, which made the span aerodynamic and restored its graceful lines. In 2007, the original concrete roadway was replaced with a stronger and lighter steel orthotropic deck. Further improvements in the past year included the complete re-painting of the 377-foot-high towers, main cables and suspender ropes, as well as installation of tower flood-lighting to enhance the Bronx/Queens skyline view.

The bridge is currently undergoing a major reconstruction of its Bronx approach, including deck, foundations and piers. "A key element of the project is the widening of the structure to allow 12-foot lanes and proper shoulders that meet present-day width standards—a notable improvement on the existing circa 1930s narrow-width roadway lanes," explained Vincent Montanti, Facility Engineer at the Bronx-Whitestone. When the Bronx work is completed the Queens approach will be rehabilitated.

Bronx-Whitestone Bridge Management Team at Your Service

General Manager: Raymond Webb, born and raised in Queens, has served as general manager at the Bronx-Whitestone since 2000. GM Webb sets a high standard of customer service for himself and his 132-member staff. He is also a well-known presence in communities on either side of the bridge; he regularly visits local meetings and speaks with bridge neighbors about construction and other issues related to the Bronx-Whitestone. He joined the authority in 1989 as a Bridge and Tunnel Officer assigned to the RFK (Triborough) Bridge. Mr. Webb has also served in a number of leadership roles including general manager of the Throgs Neck Bridge before moving two miles west to the neighboring Bronx-Whitestone, where he feels right at home.

Facility Engineer: Vincent Montanti leads an eight-member engineering staff and is responsible for all construction planning and projects on the bridge to keep it in a state of good repair. Mr. Montanti works closely with General Manager Webb to keep local community boards, elected officials and the Department of Parks and Recreation (there are parks on both sides of the bridge) informed regarding coordination of projects and activities at the bridge. Mr. Montanti received his engineering degree from the Stevens Institute of Technology. He previously served the agency, which he joined in 1990, in engineering posts at the Brooklyn-Battery and Queens Midtown Tunnels and the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge.

Operations Superintendent: Gregory Lowe directly supervises the facility's 115 Bridge and Tunnel Officers and helps oversee the entire operation of the bridge. Mr. Lowe has been with the authority since 1991 when he started as a Bridge and Tunnel Officer at the Throgs Neck Bridge. His experience also includes stints at the Henry Hudson Bridge; he has served in his current role at the Bronx-Whitestone since January 2007.

Maintenance Superintendent: Larry DeMaio is proud of his long tenure at the authority, which he joined in 1982 as a worker in the Maintenance Department at the Verrazano–Narrows Bridge. At the B–W he is responsible for a 15–member maintenance workforce, whose duties include lighting, roadway sweeping on the bridge and in the toll lanes, snow removal, and the free wrecker services provided to customers. Mr. DeMaio has also worked at the Brooklyn–Battery Tunnel and the Henry Hudson Bridge. He has been Maintenance Superintendent at the B–W since 2003.

MTA Bridges and Tunnels' facilities, which connect the five boroughs of New York City, are the Robert F. Kennedy (formerly Triborough), Throgs Neck, Bronx–Whitestone, Henry Hudson, Verrazano–Narrows, Cross Bay Veterans Memorial and Marine Parkway–Gil Hodges Bridges, and the Queens Midtown and Brooklyn–Battery Tunnels.



Bronx-Whitestone Bridge under construction



Bronx-Whitestone Bridge today