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Press Release

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[Bridges & Tunnels](#)

IMMEDIATE

Robert F. Kennedy Bridge's Harlem River Lift Span Raised to Welcome New Willis Avenue Bridge

The Harlem River Lift Span at the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge was raised Monday morning to welcome the new Willis Avenue Bridge as it traveled to its final docking place.

It took approximately 40 minutes for the prefabricated 2,400-ton bridge to get through the East River channel beneath the Harlem Lift Span. The 65-foot-high, 350-foot long and 77-foot wide bridge had to move slowly beneath the lifted bridge because of its size. The Willis Avenue Bridge is operated by New York City Department of Transportation.

"We're old pros at doing these lifts for normal marine traffic but this was like threading a needle," said Robert F. Kennedy Bridge General Manager Raymond Bush. The Harlem Lift Span is about 310 feet wide and the barge carrying the new bridge took up about 300 feet, leaving only about five feet on each side. "The captain of the barge was being extremely cautious to make sure they didn't hit the lift span," Bush said.

MTA Bridges and Tunnels is required to lift the span for marine traffic by order of the U.S. Coast Guard, which owns the right-of-way to the waterway. Most vessels that require lifting the span are construction-related, including large barges carrying equipment like cranes and cement-mixers.

Vessels may cross at all hours during the day or night with advance arrangements, but MTA Bridges and Tunnels tries to encourage passage outside of rush hours. Monday's lift began at 9:57 a.m. and concluded at 10:36 a.m.

The Harlem River Lift Span, which rises 135-feet above water in its lifted position, is part of the sprawling three-span Robert F. Kennedy Bridge, which in 2009, carried a daily average of 163,000 vehicles daily to Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx. The normal position of the span is 55 feet above water.

MTA Bridges and Tunnels' facilities include the Robert F. Kennedy, 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.



NYC DOT's new Willis Avenue Bridge as it travels beneath Robert F. Kennedy Bridge's Harlem River Lift en route to its final home. (Photo credit MTA Bridges and Tunnels/Raymond Bush.)