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Press Release

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[Bridges & Tunnels](#)

IMMEDIATE

New Harlem River Drive Ramp To MTA Bridges and Tunnels' RFK Bridge Opens Ahead Of Schedule

The newly constructed \$9 million ramp from the Harlem River Drive southbound leading onto the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge was reopened to traffic on **Monday, Dec. 19th** thanks to a fast track contract delivery method used by MTA Bridges and Tunnels for the first time on a major infrastructure project. The work was completed ahead of schedule and executed with minimal impact to motorists.

MTA Bridges and Tunnels President Jim Ferrara said the accelerated design/build contract was so successful that it will be used in future Capital Budget projects, including a \$60 million contract that will be awarded in spring to replace the RFK Bridge's Manhattan to Queens ramp.

"We are pleased to announce the opening of this brand new ramp in time for the busy holiday season traffic," said Bridges and Tunnels Chief Engineer Joe Keane. "This critical project was planned, designed and executed in just eight months, and it was done with little inconvenience to our customers thanks to a carefully orchestrated detour plan."

The work, which was expected to be finished by the end of December, is part of the nearly \$1 billion in capital improvements planned over the next 15 years for the sprawling Robert F. Kennedy Bridge, which connects Manhattan, the Bronx and Queens and carries an average 170,000 vehicles daily.

In addition to completion of this project, several longer term lane closures at the Manhattan toll plaza and other RFK ramps will be lifted in time for the holidays and before winter after a series of projects, carefully coordinated and executed by B&T's Engineering and Operations staffs, resulted in needed improvements to roadway conditions and other structural elements.

Keane praised Mount Vernon contractor Defoe and the entire MTA B&T project team, including engineers and operations personnel, for thinking outside of the box in order to complete the project, which was complicated by a major New York City Department of Transportation project at the Willis Avenue Bridge and included careful coordination with New York City Transit whose busy 126th Street Bus Depot is adjacent to the ramp.

The original, nearly 50-year-old ramp was closed and demolished in September and a temporary ramp was constructed. Motorists were able to continue on to the RFK Harlem River Lift Span at 125th Street after a brief detour through local streets. The temporary ramp was closed on Monday at the same time the new ramp was opened, and will be taken apart over the next several weeks.

The southbound ramp was scheduled to be rebuilt at the end of the current Capital Budget but the plan was expedited after recent inspections determined there was severe deterioration. RFK Facility Engineer Rocco D'Angelo said the bridge's age and several years of back-to-back harsh winters made it impossible to continuing patching worn areas.

Motorists who use the RFK will continue to notice construction activity at the bridge for years to come. In 2012, work will concentrate on additional milling and paving work at the Manhattan toll plaza, including full and partial depth repairs, paving on the Manhattan to Randall's Island ramp and the start of design and initial construction work to replace and upgrade the Manhattan-to-Queens ramp.

The largest piece of the \$1 billion in capital improvements includes an overhaul of the Manhattan and Bronx toll plazas and their supporting structures, currently scheduled to begin in 2014.

The RFK Bridge, which includes the suspension span over the East River, the Harlem River Lift Span, the Bronx truss over Bronx Kills and 14 miles of roadways that merge at a junction structure on Randall's Island, is the oldest of the MTA's seven bridges and two tunnels.

Built during the height of the Great Depression, the 75-year-old bridge is one of the first Public Works Administration projects. Known throughout the region as the Triborough Bridge, it was renamed in honor of the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy in November 2008.



HRD Ramp1: New rebar put in place before concrete deck is poured on the new Harlem River Drive ramp to the RFK Bridge. The Harlem River Lift Span is in the background.



HRD Ramp2: New \$9 million Harlem River Drive southbound ramp, which reopened to traffic on Dec. 19th.

For more photos go to: <http://bit.ly/sZ9qYA>