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Press Release

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[Bridges & Tunnels](#)

IMMEDIATE

### Two Construction Firms Awarded A Nearly \$109 Million Contract At Bronx-Whitestone Bridge To Widen And Rehabilitate Queens Approach

MTA Bridges and Tunnels announced today that it has awarded a nearly \$109 million contract to two construction firms for a three-and-a-half-year Capital project on the Queens approach at the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge.

The work includes reconstruction and widening the 1,010-foot-long Queens approach roadway structure, adding emergency breakdown lanes, and moving and rebuilding a local playground beneath the bridge.

The original estimate for the project was \$179 million but because of a favorable bid climate, the final amount was reduced by more than 35 percent. The work is similar to an ongoing project on the Bronx end of the bridge, which is expected to be completed by 2012.

The contract for the Bronx-Whitestone Queens approach work was awarded Friday, July 29th to E.E. Cruz of Manhattan and Tully Construction Co., of Queens, in a joint venture project. Similar to the current Bronx approach work, the project will require a permanent lane closure for approximately a year but three lanes of traffic will be maintained into the Bronx during the morning and three lanes into Queens in the evening by using a movable barrier. In addition, the northbound Third Avenue exit ramp will be closed for approximately two years while the roadway is rebuilt.

"The original 1930's bridge, with its narrow lanes and lack of emergency lanes, was not designed for today's traffic but this work, along with the Bronx approach project, will go a long way in transforming this 1930's era bridge into a modern, viable regional link for decades to come," said MTA Bridges and Tunnels Chief Engineer Joe Keane.

In addition to rehabilitating the bridge, the project will give something back to the neighborhood. "We've always had a strong relationship with the community, and we hope that this new and improved playground shows our commitment to be good neighbors," said Bronx-Whitestone General Manager Ray Webb.

#### Highlights of the project include:

In an agreement with NYC Parks Department, MTA will relocate the playground at Francis Lewis Park, which is almost directly beneath the bridge, to a grassy area just past the current bocce courts and build a new playground featuring separate play areas for 2-5 year-olds and 6-12 year-olds, a "spray shower" water feature, a sensory play area, new swings, a climbing boulder and new benches. The playground will remain open through this summer and close in the fall. It will reopen in its new location with all new equipment by spring 2012.

Reconstruction of the bridge's support foundations and seven, new double-arch, concrete piers will be built to support the roadway's wider, 12-foot lanes and emergency breakdown lanes. This work will be done beneath the bridge with no impact to traffic. It will begin in fall 2011 and be completed in about a year.

In summer 2012, lane by lane demolition of the existing 1,010 feet of approach roadway and the rehabilitation of the roadway superstructure will take place. This work will require a permanent lane closure for approximately a year. A movable barrier will be used to maintain traffic flow during peak morning and afternoon drive times.

The northbound, Third Avenue exit ramp will be closed beginning summer 2012 and will remain closed for approximately two years to accommodate construction work near the ramp. Vehicles will be detoured through local streets.

The southbound 14th Avenue exit ramp will be widened and repaved, a deceleration lane will be added, and new curbing put in place.

The final stage of the project will include demolition of the old piers beneath the roadway in 2014 with no impact to traffic. Once construction is completed the basketball and handball courts in the old playground space will be restored and new landscaping will be added.

"There will be a lot of activity going on at the bridge for the next several years," said Facility Engineer Christopher Saladino. "We appreciate our customers' patience while we do this important work, which in the long-run will improve traffic flow and provide a smoother driving experience for all who



**Work already completed on Bronx approach side of bridge shows the new, wider piers. Once completed new roadway decking will allow for wider lanes and, for the first time, emergency breakdown shoulders. The same work will be done on the Queens approach as part of the Capital project just awarded.**

use the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge."

The Bronx-Whitestone Bridge's 2,300-foot long suspension span was the fourth longest in the world when the bridge opened April 30, 1939, a day before the New York World's Fair in Flushing Meadows Park. In 2010, a daily average of about 117,000 vehicles crossed the bridge.