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Press Release

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[Bridges & Tunnels](#)

IMMEDIATE

MTA's Flagship RFK Bridge Targeted For A Nearly \$1 Billion Capital Improvement Projects Spanning The Next 15 Years

The sprawling Robert F. Kennedy Bridge, which connects Manhattan, the Bronx and Queens and serves a combined average 170,000 vehicles daily, will undergo nearly \$1 billion in capital improvements over the next 15 years in order to make sure the 75-year-old bridge continues to be able to meet 21st century traffic demands.

Long-term work includes completely reconstructing the bridge structures that support the Manhattan and Bronx toll plazas, as well as several smaller projects that will focus on rehabilitating or replacing the bridge's seven ramps.

"Motorists will see work going on at the RFK Bridge well into the next decade," said Bridges and Tunnels President Jim Ferrara. "Each project is vitally important to insure that the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge continues to be a vibrant link in the region's transportation network."

The RFK Bridge is the oldest of the agency's seven bridges and two tunnels. It opened to traffic on July 11, 1936 during the height of the Great Depression, and was the first bridge in New York City designed and exclusively built for the automobile. The bridge also offers pedestrian access from three boroughs.

Its three spans include 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 where traffic is then distributed to and from Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx. Known throughout the region as the Triborough Bridge, the bridge was renamed in honor of the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy in November 2008.

"It is a massive challenge maintaining and caring for 2.6 million square feet of roadway decking and infrastructure while maintaining traffic for the nearly 60 million cars and trucks that go through the Bronx and Manhattan plazas each year," said MTA Bridges and Tunnels Chief Engineer Joe Keane. "Each project is designed to minimize customer impact by working off-peak when possible and safely maintaining as many lanes of traffic as we can."

The largest portion of the estimated \$1 billion improvements is an estimated \$700 million for reconstruction of bridge structures supporting the Manhattan and Bronx toll plazas. Design work on the Bronx plaza reconstruction is expected to begin by the end of 2011 with construction beginning in 2014. The full reconstruction of the Manhattan plaza is currently slated as part of the 2015-2019 Capital plan, with actual roadway work beginning in late 2019.

Among the Capital Improvement projects that drivers will immediately begin seeing is the removal and replacement of 400,000-square-feet of old asphalt on the Manhattan toll plaza. Once the old asphalt is removed, a new type of rubberized asphalt will be applied to help prevent water from intruding into the concrete deck, and provide a smoother riding surface for customers. This work, in conjunction with additional, more extensive interim repairs scheduled for 2014, will help extend the life of the roadway until full reconstruction commences in 2019. This \$5.8 million project will be done in two phases and be completed by fall.

Other work that is currently underway or planned includes:

2011

- \$13 million project to replace the bonded wearing surface on the East River suspension spans, the Harlem River lift span and the Bronx truss span. This project is ongoing at night during off-peak hours and will be completed in the fall.
- \$12 million project to design and build the deck replacement on the 12,000-square-foot Harlem River Drive southbound exit ramp onto the bridge at East 125th Street. The old ramp will be closed after Labor Day. A temporary on-grade exit ramp from the southbound Harlem River Drive onto a short detour through local streets will be in place while work is done. The ramp is expected to reopen by the end of the year.
- \$5 million to replace 40,000 square feet of decking on the Queens-to-Manhattan ramp. This work is underway with two lanes of traffic being maintained during peak driving times. Work will be completed by the end of 2011.
- \$1 million for localized repairs on 10,000 square feet of repairs at the Manhattan and Bronx toll plazas. This work has been completed.
- \$900,000 to repair and replace 39,000 square feet of protective asphalt overlay on the Queens-to-Bronx Randall's Island ramp and Randall's Island-to-Queens ramp. Work scheduled to begin late summer and be completed by November.

2013

- \$52 million for a project to reconstruct the 80,000-square foot Manhattan-to-Queens ramp. Design work will begin in 2012, actual roadway work in 2013 with completion by the end of 2014. Two lanes of traffic will be maintained on this ramp for most of the reconstruction to minimize impact to traffic.

2014

- \$49 million project to perform interim repairs to the Manhattan plaza roadway deck. These repairs will ensure a safe and smooth riding surface for our customers until complete reconstruction can take place in 2019.
- \$95 million project for the reconstruction of the East 124th/125th Street Manhattan entrance/exit ramps leading onto and off the bridge. Design is expected to begin in 2012 with reconstruction work beginning on the roadway in the fall of 2014.

2016

- \$96 million project for reconstruction of the FDR ramp. Design is expected to begin in 2012 with reconstruction work beginning on the roadway in 2016.

"While customers will see a lot of activity at the RFK Bridge for many years, in the end our goal is to keep the bridge part of the New York City landscape for many decades to come," said RFK Facility Engineer Rocco D'Angelo. "We appreciate our customers' patience while these improvements are underway."

Photos: Courtesy of MTA



RFK 1: View from atop the Queens tower of the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge's Queens suspension span, looking down on Ward's end of Randall's Island. Photographer: MTA's Patrick Cashin. April 2011.



RFK 2: Night time view of Robert F. Kennedy's Queens suspension span with Manhattan skyline in background. Photographer: Patrick Cashin. April 2011.