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Press Release

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IMMEDIATE

Governor Cuomo Announces HOV/Bus Lane to Open Westbound on Verrazano-Narrows Bridge Reducing Travel Time and Improving Environment

New Lane Will Provide Seamless Route From the Hugh L. Carey Tunnel to Staten Island

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced that on Tuesday, September 5, an HOV/Bus lane will open on the Upper Level westbound (Staten Island-bound) direction of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, completing a seamless route from Manhattan to Staten Island for users of the special lane, which reduces travel time and helps the environment. The reversible seventh lane of traffic will transition from eastbound to westbound to accommodate the afternoon/evening rush hours and will connect HOV/Bus lanes on the Gowanus/Brooklyn-Queens Expressway to the Staten Island Expressway, improving travel times for HOV/Bus commuters heading home to Staten Island.

The eastbound (to Brooklyn and Manhattan/Queens/Long Island) HOV/Bus lane opened ahead of schedule on June 22, and has reduced travel time during the morning rush from the bridge to the Hugh L. Carey Tunnel, providing commuters with a more efficient and reliable commute. By reducing idling and encouraging carpooling and bus use, the HOV/Bus lane also helps reduce carbon emissions that are harmful for the environment. The daily reversal of the lane is managed in conjunction with the NYS Department of Transportation, which operates the BQE/Gowanus and Staten Island Expressway HOV/Bus lanes.

"The Verrazano-Narrows Bridge is a vital transportation artery for residents of Staten Island, and HOV lanes on the bridge will help alleviate congestion and streamline travel for commuters traveling between Staten Island and the rest of the city," **Governor Cuomo said**. "The opening of HOV lanes combined with the transition to Cashless Tolling furthers New York's ongoing efforts to transform our transportation infrastructure to meet the needs of 21st century travelers, while providing efficient commutes for generations to come."

"Having an HOV/Bus lane open in both directions on the bridge is a great benefit to all who use it," **said Cedrick T. Fulton, President of MTA Bridges and Tunnels**. "HOV users and Bus riders now have a seamless, continuous route to the Hugh L. Carey Tunnel from Staten Island in the morning, and back in the afternoon, saving people time and improving the rush hour traffic flow daily. And every commuter who chooses to carpool or take a bus over driving alone is helping the environment by reducing their carbon footprint."

The construction of the Verrazano's new reversible HOV/Bus lane is part of the larger \$235.7 million Verrazano-Narrows Bridge upper level deck project, which replaced the original 1960s-era roadway with a lighter-weight, longer-lasting steel deck. In addition to the new roadway, new sign structures have been added, finger joint systems at the anchorages and towers rehabilitated, and new drainage and energy efficient roadway lighting installed.

The Verrazano Bridge converted to Cashless Tolling on July 8. Now, westbound (to Staten Island) customers drive under gantries without stopping and their E-ZPass accounts are automatically charged, and vehicles without E-ZPass have their license plate recorded and a bill is mailed to the registered owner of the vehicle. E-ZPass tags should be mounted inside the vehicle's front windshield.

Congressman Dan Donovan said, "Any and all efforts to relieve Staten Islanders of their atrocious commutes are welcome. Thank you to the MTA and Governor Cuomo for getting this done, and I look forward to working with them on further infrastructure proposals to solve our borough's traffic nightmare."

Senator Andrew J. Lanza said, "Every minute saved in commuting time translates to more time home with our families. The opening of the Staten Island bound HOV lane will help get evening commuters home faster. I am thankful for Governor Cuomo's continued commitment to address Staten Island's needs with regard to the Verrazano Bridge and commuters."

Senator Diane J. Savino said, "Today is a great day for Staten Island commuters as we continue the improvements to the VZ Bridge and the SIE. The implementation of the westbound HOV will speed Staten Islanders home and, together with Cashless Tolling, we are giving Islanders and others parts of their lives back. Thank you Governor Cuomo, along with the MTA and NYS DOT for delivering on this promise."

Assemblyman Matthew Titone said, "New York is a very crowded place, we all have places to go, and Staten Islanders have one of the longest commutes in the nation. I am heartened that the Governor is attuned to improving our quality of life by taking this step to help ease our commute and improve our air quality by instituting the HOV lane going to Staten Island for the evening rush hour."

Assemblyman Michael Cusick said, "It is great to see the MTA and Governor Cuomo working to address and reform the rush hour traffic flow to Staten Island. With the opening of the HOV/Bus lane on the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, westbound, Staten Island commuters who utilize express buses and the carpool system will enjoy a quicker than normal commute home during the afternoon rush hours."

Staten Island Borough President James S. Oddo said, "For far too long, the lack of an HOV Lane on the commute home has stuck out as a glaring omission in our transportation system. The fact is no single action or project will alone solve our 'commuting crisis,' but taken together they can help

make a bad commute more bearable. I am hopeful that this new lane will get Staten Islanders home quicker so they can enjoy more time with their families, instead of sitting frustrated on hot crowded buses."

New York City Councilman Steven Matteo said, "The goal is to ensure my constituents and all Staten Islanders get to work and return home in a safe and efficient manner. With the implementation of the westbound HOV/Bus Lane, Staten Island commuters will finally be able to get the benefit of a contiguous HOV lane during both morning and afternoon rush hours. While there is no miracle cure to the commutes Staten Islanders face each day, this will no doubt bring a marked improvement. I thank the Governor, the MTA and State DOT for working with us on this issue to ease traffic and make our residents' daily commutes a little easier."

New York City Councilwoman Deborah Rose said, "The opening of this westbound HOV lane is a welcome addition to our transportation network that will help many of my constituents get home a little sooner after a long day of work. This lane will not only speed commutes but also encourage more Staten Islanders to carpool and use mass transit. I thank the Governor and state officials for ensuring its completion as we return from Labor Day weekend."