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Press Release

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[Bridges & Tunnels](#)

IMMEDIATE

The Hugh L. Carey Tunnel: Connecting Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn for 70 Years

Photos of the Tunnel's Construction and Opening Day are Available [Here](#)

Photos of the Tunnel's 2012 Renaming are Available [Here](#)

The Hugh L. Carey Tunnel has reached a milestone birthday, turning 70 years old on May 25.

Designed by renowned engineer Ole Singstad, the Hugh L. Carey Tunnel is the longest continuous underwater vehicular tunnel in North America, stretching 1.7 miles long between portals. The tunnels' two tubes running under the East River connect Lower Manhattan to the Red Hook section of Brooklyn. In 2019, more than 19.4 million vehicles used the tunnel.

Prior to the start of construction, master builder Robert Moses, who presided over the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority (now known as MTA Bridges and Tunnels) for more than three decades, had offered a controversial proposal to build a bridge, rather than a tunnel, linking lower Manhattan with Brooklyn, to save time and cost. Many, including then-First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, successfully opposed the idea because it would have required demolition of much of Battery Park and would have visually blocked the lower Manhattan skyline.

Construction on the tunnel was begun by the New York City Tunnel Authority in 1940, with the Triborough Bridge Authority assisting in the building of approach roads and in financing. The job took a decade, partly because of a three-year delay caused by iron and steel shortages during World War II.

Ticker tape rained down from windows as New York City Mayor William O'Dwyer cut the ribbon on the west tube of the tunnel in Manhattan. A parade of dignitaries, led by O'Dwyer and Moses, then traveled by motorcade through the tunnel where they were welcomed by a cheering crowd on the Brooklyn side.

"The Hugh L. Carey Tunnel is a vital link between Manhattan and Brooklyn, and it remains just as vital to New York City as it did when it opened in 1950," **said Daniel DeCrescenzo, Acting President MTA Bridges and Tunnels.**

Originally named the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel, it was renamed in 2012 in honor of the state's 51st governor, Hugh L. Carey, who served from 1975 to 1982.

During Superstorm Sandy in October 2012, approximately 60 million gallons of seawater flowed into the tunnel, inundating the tubes for nearly two-thirds of their length. MTA Bridges and Tunnels quickly pumped out the water and made emergency repairs, and both tubes were reopened only three weeks later. Over the next several years, MTA Bridges and Tunnels undertook a huge restoration project, replacing all of the Sandy-damaged tunnel systems, from wall tiles and interior lighting to traffic control signals and pumps. In order to prevent similar damage from a future storm, massive steel flood gates, each weighing more than 20 tons, were installed at the tunnel's four portals.

The Hugh L. Carey Tunnel was a critical route for emergency vehicles during the 9/11 terrorist attack, and afterward as construction vehicles bound for Ground Zero made frequent daily crossings. The facility is also the starting point for the annual "Tunnel-to-Towers Run," commemorating the heroism of firefighter Stephen Siller, who died on 9/11 after running through the tunnel on foot in an effort to reach the towers.

Hugh L. Carey Tunnel Facts:

- Average daily weekday traffic is more than 57,000 (2019 statistic)

The one-way toll charge on Opening Day was 35 cents.

- The tunnel converted to cashless tolling on January 4, 2017, and the toll booths were demolished immediately thereafter.

- The tunnel is actually two parallel tubes, 15 feet apart and each 9,117-feet in length from portal to portal.

- Each tube contains two lanes each.

- Four ventilation buildings provide a complete air change in the tunnel every 1.5 minutes.