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Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges Project named finalist in America's Best Transportation Project Competition Online voters and expert judges to choose winners from 12 projects nation-wide

(Trenton) – New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) Commissioner Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti today announced that the Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges Project Contract 4, which reconstructed the Old Causeway Bridge, has been named a finalist in AASHTO's 2020 America's Transportation Awards Competition.

"We are extremely proud of the national recognition that this project has received," Commissioner Gutierrez-Scaccetti said. "This announcement is a testament to the commitment of the men and women of the New Jersey Department of Transportation, as well as our contractors, to deliver projects that improve our communities and enhance quality of life for New Jerseyans."

The America's Transportation Awards competition sponsored by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), AAA, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, is a competition in which state DOTs compete in three categories: Quality of Life/Community Development; Best Use of Technology and Innovation; and Operations Excellence.

Each category is also designated by project budget size: small (less than \$25 million), medium (\$25 million to \$200 million), and large (greater than \$200 million). Projects are judged within their region. 12 regional winners were selected from 79 nominations to compete for the National Grand Prize, and the People's Choice Award. \$10,000 in cash awards will be given to the winners to donate to a transportation-related charity or scholarship program of their choosing.

The Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges Project, which is designated as a medium sized project, is competing in the Quality of Life/Community Development Category.

An independent panel of transportation industry experts will select the Grand Prize winner, while the general public will decide the People's Choice Award winner through online voting. Online votes will be weighted to each state's population, allowing for greater competition between states with larger and smaller populations.

The winners will be announced at the virtual AASHTO Annual Meeting the week of November 9-13, 2020. Online voting begins today and ends at 11:59 p.m. on October 25, 2020.

Cast your vote for NJDOT's Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges Project at AmericasTransportationAwards.org. (Scroll to the bottom – it is the last project listed)
Individuals can cast no more than one vote per day.

About the Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges Project

Contract 4, which is a finalist for the national award, is part of the \$312 million federally-funded Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges Project that is improving a 3-mile stretch of Route 72 from Marsha Drive in Stafford to Long Beach Boulevard in Ship Bottom.

The project is being advanced through a series of five contracts to improve the Route 72 Causeway, a vital connector between Long Beach Island and Stafford Township. Four out of five contracts are complete. The final contract is expected to begin this fall and be completed in 2022.

The overall project included the construction of a new 2,400 foot-long bridge, completed in 2016, which sits parallel to the Old Causeway Bridge that was reconstructed in Contract 4. In addition to constructing a new parallel bridge and reconstructing the existing bridge, the project also rehabilitated three trestle bridges and included environmental mitigation on Cedar Bonnet Island.

For the \$91 million Contract 4, George Harms Construction Co. used an innovative approach to reconstruct the Old Causeway Bridge that saved time and money, and resulted in reopening the bridge a year early. This contract began in the fall of 2016 and completed in June 2019.

In 2019, Contract 5, the Cedar Bonnet Island Habitat Restoration and Management Plan, received the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Environmental Excellence Award. Under the \$9.6 million federal and state-funded environmental mitigation work, NJDOT and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) created an environmental trail providing the first public access to the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge on Cedar Bonnet Island, and used an innovative approach to help improve Barnegat Bay water quality while meeting DEP Stormwater Management (SWM) Rules.

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