



Construction NEWS

Vol. 33 No. 8

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2017

\$1.50

Great Fanfare, Accolades Mark Mario M. Cuomo Bridge Opening

By JOHN JORDAN

TARRYTOWN—After only 53 months of construction—following more than 25 years of protracted debate at more than a thousand public meetings and hearings—the westbound section of the New York State Thruway spanning the mighty Hudson River at its widest point is now open for business.

This colossal achievement was celebrated Aug. 24 by more than 800 business, organized labor and elected leaders from the region who were bussed to the center of the near-completed northern/westbound span to commemorate this major milestone in the construction of the \$3.98-billion Gov. Mario M. Cuomo Bridge that will replace the Tappan Zee Bridge next year.

The functionally obsolete Tappan Zee Bridge served as a “symbol of procrastination and incompetence” and is



Gov. Andrew Cuomo and some 800 business, organized labor and elected leaders from the region celebrated the opening of the westbound span of the new \$3.98-billion Gov. Mario M. Cuomo Bridge on Aug. 24.

PHOTO CREDIT: George Drapeau III

now being replaced by a “safer, smarter structure,” Gov. Cuomo said at the opening of his 25-minute speech. He noted that state officials had worked on and debated replacing the Tappan Zee Bridge for more than two decades before he and President Barack Obama agreed to fast-track the project’s approvals in August 2011. Construction on the new span officially began in early 2013 when the Federal Highway Administration and the U.S. Department of Transportation greenlighted the project with a Notice to Proceed. The first foundational steel piles were driven into the Hudson River the following October.

The construction project is one of the largest in the nation and the biggest in the history of the New York State Thruway Authority.

“This is a great structure, no doubt,”
Please turn to next page

Great Fanfare, Accolades Mark Mario M. Cuomo Bridge Opening

Continued from page 1

Gov. Cuomo said. "But to me, this is more than a structure. This bridge is a symbol. It's a symbol that shows this state and this nation what we haven't been doing for years. Because in truth, this state has stood still for too long. For decades, we failed to build, we failed to push ourselves, we failed to embark on new ventures and we're now paying the price for it."



From left, Steve Bermingham of Glaziers L.U. 1087, John Drew of District Council 9, and Brian Casey of Bridge Painters L.U. 806.

A highlight of the program was when Gov. Cuomo drove on the new bridge span in a 1955 Corvette with Armando "Chick" Galella of Sleepy Hollow, who drove the same model year Corvette as part of the inaugural procession that crossed the Tappan Zee Bridge on Dec. 15, 1955. The Sleepy Hollow resident is a veteran and Bronze Star recipient who survived the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor.

Adding to the morning-long festivities were the driving rhythms, harmonies and melodies of the two-dozen members of the Tappan Zee Bridgeman brass band, which created the high-energy soundtrack for the bridge-opening ceremony.

The event was staged before the newly named Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge was partially open to four lanes of Rockland-bound traffic early Saturday morning, Aug. 26. For the next few months, northbound/westbound drivers on the New York State Thruway (I-87/I-287) will cross the Hudson River on the new bridge, while southbound/eastbound

drivers will use the old bridge, each having four traffic lanes available. Later this fall, the new bridge will completely replace the 62-year-old Tappan Zee Bridge when four lanes of Westchester-bound traffic are also shifted onto the same northern span.

In his speech capping a two-hour ceremony at the center of the northern span, Gov. Cuomo began his remarks singling out members of the BuildTheBridgeNowNY.org coalition, who were leading advocates for construction of a new Tappan Zee Bridge. They included: Ross Pepe, president of the Construction Industry Council of Westchester & Hudson Valley, Inc.; Marsha Gordon, president and CEO of The Business Council of Westchester; and Al Samuels, president of the Rockland Business Association. He also acknowledged "the 7,000 men and women who worked on this bridge and showed the quality of union labor, which is second to none in this nation."

Gov. Cuomo stressed that the \$3.9-billion project being developed by the consortium Tappan Zee Constructors under a Design-Build contract is on time and on budget. The entire project is expected to be completed sometime in 2018. After all traffic has been shifted onto the first span, Tappan Zee Constructors will demolish the landings of the old bridge, which occupy the same footprint of the second span, and connect the second span to land. When completed, the new span will feature: eight general traffic lanes; four breakdown and emergency lanes; space for future bus rapid transit and commuter rail; a bicycle and walking path with six unique viewing areas; cashless tolling and energy-efficient LED lighting.

"As a gateway to the Hudson Valley region, the new Gov. Mario M. Cuomo Bridge is a powerful statement that we are committed to protecting and enhancing the quality of life of everyone who resides in or visits New York State," said Mr. Pepe of the Construction Industry Council. "This new bridge is an instant icon, melding the expansive vistas of the Hudson River and the natural beauty of the valley



From left, John Skinner, president of Metal Lathers L.U. 46; Edward Doyle, president of the Building & Construction Trades Council of Westchester & Putnam Counties, Inc.; Anthony Braccio, Jr., president of Operating Engineers L.U. 137; and Greg Lalevee, business manager of Operating Engineers L.U. 825.

with its eight welcoming towers that signal access to the most dynamic metropolitan region in the world. This new bridge is a sheer force of political will of both Gov. Andrew Cuomo and former President Barack Obama, who choose to 'fast-track' this bridge replacement project on Labor Day 2011. How spectacular it is to now be standing on this new bridge less than six years later."

"Today is a great day for the Business Council of Westchester and the entire Hudson Valley," said Ms. Gordon of the Business Council of Westchester. "Having worked so long and hard with the business community to make this project a reality, it is a tremendous honor to stand here today on this magnificent new bridge. In addition to the thousands of construction jobs created by this project, the new bridge is vital to the long-term economic vitality of our county and region."

Rockland Business Association President Al Samuels said the existing Tappan Zee Bridge "was a symbol of the infrastructure problems in this country. It was sort of the poster child for it." He added that with the completion of the new span,

"the extent we can use the new bridge for economic development, for tourism, for the attraction of new residents, that's on us. It's there but we have to develop it," he said.

But New York is not waiting for the federal government. We're not waiting for any state to show us what to do because in New York we lead the way. That's who we are and that's what we



Gov. Andrew Cuomo with Armando "Chick" Galella of Sleepy Hollow. Then 34 years old, Mr. Galella drove the same model year Corvette as part of the inaugural procession that crossed the Tappan Zee Bridge on Dec. 15, 1955.

Gov. Cuomo used the event to tout his \$100-billion infrastructure program that includes major projects at LaGuardia Airport, JFK Airport and the Moynihan Train Hall at Penn Station. "President Trump had promised in his campaign a \$1-trillion infrastructure fund. So far, nothing has materialized.

do. And the same ability and the same commitment you see on this bridge today, we're bringing all over the state of New York."

The governor ended the event with a tribute to his late father. "Mario Cuomo would be proud of what we have done today because we have made this place a better place."



From left, Christopher Alund of the New York State Department of Labor and Jim O'Neill of Hill International, Inc.



Members of the Tappan Zee Bridgeman brass band who performed throughout the bridge-opening ceremony.