



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Betty Little

Crown Point Bridge Updates -- October 27

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Crown Point Bridge Update -- Tuesday, October 27

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NEW YORK GOVERNOR PATERSON AND VERMONT GOVERNOR DOUGLAS ANNOUNCE TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES TO ASSIST RESIDENTS IMPACTED BY THE LAKE CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE CLOSURE

New York and Vermont Transportation Agencies Continue Work to Assess Bridge Deterioration and Develop a Repair Plan

In response to the recent Champlain Bridge closure, New York Governor David A. Paterson and Vermont Governor Jim Douglas today announced transportation alternatives so that residents can cross Lake Champlain. New York and Vermont have reached an agreement with the Fort Ticonderoga Ferry operator to offer free ferry service between Ticonderoga, New York and Shoreham, Vermont and with Lake Champlain Transportation to offer free ferry service at the Essex/Charlotte crossing. Also, starting tomorrow, free express bus service will bring commuters to three major employers in Vermont. In addition, pedestrian ferry service has been established north of the Lake Champlain Bridge between Westport, New York and Basin Harbor, Vermont.

“Governor Douglas and I continue to work diligently on both sides of the Lake to offer transportation alternatives to New York and Vermont residents who have been impacted by the closure of the Champlain Bridge,” Governor Paterson said. “We will continue to work with Vermont to find temporary solutions for crossing Lake Champlain and longer-term solutions for reopening the bridge to traffic.”

Governor Douglas said: “Governor Paterson shares my commitment to easing the burden on commuters, reestablishing truck and agricultural vehicle traffic, and allowing businesses and families to get across Lake Champlain in a safe affordable and timely manner. These alternatives are an important step in that direction. We are going to continue to make this our top transportation priority.”

Free Ferry Service

Both New York and Vermont officials have reached an agreement with Lake Champlain Transportation to subsidize free ferry service for passenger vehicles, motorcycles, buses, fuel trucks and standard-width agricultural vehicles, including dairy trucks crossing the lake between Essex, New York and Charlotte, Vermont. The two states also reached an agreement with the operator of the Fort Ticonderoga Ferry to offer free service between Ticonderoga, New York and Shoreham, Vermont. The free services will begin tomorrow.

Express Bus Service

New express commuter bus service between New York and three major Vermont employers will also begin tomorrow. The free commuter service will transport workers between two parking locations in New York to Porter Medical Center and Middlebury College in Middlebury and the B.F. Goodrich plant in Vergennes. The two-hour bus trips will run Monday through Friday, with morning pick ups and evening drop offs occurring at the Fort Ticonderoga Ferry site and the boat launch on Dock Lane in Port Henry. Buses will depart New York at 5:30 a.m. and 6:30 a.m. each morning and will depart Vermont at 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. each evening.

Pedestrian Ferry

A pedestrian ferry between Westport and Basin Harbor began operating today. Parking is available at no charge at the Essex County Fairgrounds and complementary shuttle bus service will transport pedestrian passengers to the ferry. Parking is also available at the Basin Harbor Club in Vermont.

Shuttle Bus Service

Essex County Transit and Addison County Transit will operate shuttle buses between several park-and-ride locations set up in New York and the ferries. Routes are expected to include Crown Point and Ticonderoga in New York and the B.F. Goodrich plant in Vermont.

Anne Noonan, Vice President of Marketing and Traffic at Trailways Transportation System said: "We are pleased to be working with the New York State Department of Transportation to offer assistance to those who need transportation at this time."

Other Options Being Explored

At the direction of both Governor Paterson and Governor Douglas, New York and Vermont transportation officials continue to explore additional ferry service options.

The Ticonderoga Ferry and Essex/Charlotte Ferry have already extended their operating hours, utilizing lights provided by the New York State Department of Transportation. The states are also examining options for an expanded vehicle ferry service that could accommodate trucks at the Ticonderoga ferry location.

The two states continue to move forward with structural assessments of the Lake Champlain Bridge. Diving inspections performed last week and over the weekend revealed that two piers supporting the bridge are in need of repair. Additional piers will undergo further underwater inspections this week, after deep mud and zebra mussels are removed from the structures. A plan is being developed to encase the deteriorating piers in reinforced concrete, though the repair work could take several months to complete.

New York is exploring the option of installing a temporary bridge south of Ticonderoga to carry traffic in the interim. Locations adjacent to the current bridge are not feasible because of the fragility of the existing structure.

Public Forums

Work continues on a repair plan to reopen the 2,184-foot-long bridge between Crown Point, New York, and Chimney Point, Vermont. Public meetings regarding the bridge closure have been set up for Tuesday, October 27, at the Addison Central School located at 121 Vermont Route 17W, Addison; and on Wednesday, October 28 at the Moriah Central School located at 29 Viking Lane, Port Henry. Both meetings will begin at 7 p.m. Additional information will be provided at the meetings.

Vermont Director Announced

Governor Douglas today also announced that he has tapped 34 year New York Department of Transportation veteran and current Vermont Agency of Transportation project manager, Jim Harris to lead Vermont's multi-faceted approach to managing the Champlain Bridge closure.

"Jim Harris' leadership skills and his ability to manage challenges that extend beyond transportation make him more than qualified for this vital role," said Governor Douglas. "He has more has 40 years of experience in transportation and project management. His expertise on the ground in Addison County everyday dealing with the wide-range of challenges, from economic and jobs loss to agriculture, caused by this transportation crisis will be essential."

Harris' responsibilities will extend beyond the transportation situation caused by the Champlain Bridge closure. Harris will act as the point of contact for all Vermont state agencies and departments as well as local officials and the public.

For More Information

In New York, Governor Paterson has established a toll-free hotline, 1-888-769-7243, and a walk-in outreach center at the bridge. Additional information about the bridge and available options for crossing Lake Champlain is available at <http://www.lcbclosure.org>. Vermont residents can call 211 for information regarding the bridge closure. An Addison County office location for Vermont Project Manager Jim Harris will be announced soon.

Crown Point Bridge Update -- Thursday, October 22

Public Information Meetings scheduled by New York State Department of Transportation and Vermont Agency of Transportation:

Tuesday, October 27, 2009

7 p.m.

Addison Central School

121 VT Route 17W

Addison, Vermont 05491

Wednesday, October 28, 2009

7 p.m.

Moriah Central School

39 Viking Lane

Port Henry, New York 12974

New York State has set up a toll-free hot line at (888)769-7243. The hot line is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and businesses and area residents are encouraged to call to express concerns as well as offer suggestions.

An outreach center is located in the Lake Champlain Visitor's Center at 814 Bridge Road in Crown Point. The center, also open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and can be reached by calling (518)485-1159. The hot line and outreach center will inform residents and businesses of state and federal resources available to mitigate the hardship caused by the bridge closure.

The NYSDOT has had divers in the water to collect core samples from the piers needed to determine their strength and are in the process of reviewing the data they currently have, as well as the new data they are collecting, to design repairs and develop a time line for reopening the bridge.

Options such as a temporary bridge or temporary ferry landing are being analyzed by both New York State and Vermont.

Other options being considered include setting up park and ride locations and creating a bussing system to help commuters.

Senator Little is continuing to push the DOT and Governor on daily basis to come up with a solution as soon as possible. She has also met with federal representatives, including U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand.

Additional information will be posted as it becomes available.