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FDOT's October 15 Updates on the Pensacola Bay Bridge Recovery Efforts

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – As demolition efforts continue on the Pensacola Bay Bridge, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) remains committed to enhancing the department's community outreach program to keep the public informed of developments associated with the repairs of the Pensacola Bay Bridge.

To reinforce FDOT Secretary Kevin J. Thibault's, P.E. expectation of complete transparency and community assistance, FDOT's outreach team is coordinating with stakeholder groups and civic organizations to develop an engagement calendar so members of the public can attend presentations and personally meet with FDOT. FDOT is also continuing to meet with state and local officials to further discuss the bridge reconstruction as well as other actions that are being considered to efficiently restore regional connectivity.

FDOT recognizes that businesses impacted by the closure of the Pensacola Bay Bridge are concerned about the extended time this critical connection will be out of use. It is vital that their customers have access to their business and that they continue to patronize these businesses, in spite of the disruption of traffic. The department is examining potential ways to help alleviate the concerns of local business owners.

Progress at the bridge continues and one damaged span of the bridge has been removed while crews continue to carefully remove damaged portions from additional spans in order to minimize impacts to the existing structure. Two of the three barges under the bridge have also been removed, accelerating demolition efforts. To date, 15 of the 27 barges have been removed from the area.

Three bridge contractors are on site, increasing equipment resources to include:

- 50 additional personnel to expedite demolition.
- Additional dive teams have been deployed, bringing the total to eight, to assist with the final inspection.
- Five barge mounted cranes, including two 300-ton cranes, have been brought in to replace existing cranes that were damaged or lost to assist in the process.
- A specialty barge designed to take large damaged sections away from the bridge for demolition or to be delivered to an artificial reef site. This will allow repair work to proceed without having to wait for deck demolition to be complete.

FDOT has been continuously working to improve the traffic flow along the Pensacola Bay Bridge detour routes. To date, FDOT has

- Installed a new temporary traffic signal at the I-10 westbound ramps at State Road (S.R.) 281
- Delineators have been installed to provide a free flow southbound movement from the I-10 eastbound ramp onto southbound S.R. 281
- Additional temporary traffic cameras have been installed that have significantly improved travel time.
- The Road Ranger service that was previously on the Pensacola Bay Bridge has been relocated to the Garcon Point Bridge to help with minor incidents and to keep traffic flowing as much as possible.
- Developing plans to temporarily widen 2,000 feet of northbound and southbound S.R. 281 south of the I-10 interchange.
- Developing plans to temporarily widening the eastbound I-10 off ramp at eastbound S.R. 281 off ramp to two lanes to better facilitate traffic movement leaving the interstate.

FDOT continues to develop and improve alternative transportation solutions to move people and goods safely and efficiently through the region while the Pensacola Bay Bridge is being repaired. Examples include:

- Exploring all funding avenues available to implement a ferry service between Gulf Breeze and Pensacola.
- Funding Escambia County Area Transit's (ECAT) temporary bus route to help transport passengers between the Pensacola Bay Center Park in Escambia County and the Tiger Point Community Center City in Gulf Breeze.
- Gathering information such as potential ridership, times of operation, and duration of service as well as reviewing existing facilities that would be necessary for the safe operation of a ferry or additional bus routes.

The Pensacola Bay Bridge has a targeted re-opening date of early March 2021. Once repairs are complete, all four lanes will be open with no load restrictions and at the same condition as expected for new construction. As each repair method is developed, FDOT will be conducting reviews to ensure the contractor is hitting all milestones in the established schedule.

The design is underway for the permanent repairs and reestablishment of four lanes of traffic on the bridge with a focus on substructure repairs which includes the piers. Durability, and ensuring there is absolutely no reduction in the bridge's strength as a result of the repairs, remains paramount in the design plans.

FDOT is assessing the final total number of the spans/piers that will ultimately need to be replaced. The contractor has already fabricated 25 beams and the piers needed to begin repairs. The contractor has also begun constructing more replacement beams and piers at its offsite yard and has reached out to other facilities to assist in production. This aggressive effort will allow the installation of these items to commence as soon as demolition of the damaged items are complete.

Further preliminary inspection findings include:

- To date, FDOT divers have inspected 202 underwater footings while top side inspection teams have assessed 105 spans, 202 piers and 525 beams.
- The number of spans requiring full replacement remains at five and FDOT has identified an additional two that will require partial replacement.
- A minimum of twelve pedestrian spans have been identified for replacement.
- FDOT will have to replace a number of beams and is still determining the specific number needing replacement.

The U.S. Coast Guard has established a 500-yard buffer zone for all Pensacola Bay Bridge construction activities. Vessels may use only low or idle speeds within the buffer zone. Due to the potential for underwater hazards, boaters are advised to use caution near the bridge. The navigational channel has been inspected and is free of hazards. For this reason, crossing beneath the bridge should be done only at the navigational channel.

Motorists should continue to use all available detour routes, which include the Garcon Point Bridge and State Road 87. At this time, tolls on the Garcon Point Bridge have been suspended through 6 a.m., Friday, October 23.

Details on the detour routes, including graphics, FAQs, and regular updates can be found online at fdot.gov/PensacolaBay. Members of the public wishing to receive these updates can choose to subscribe by providing their email address on this website as well.

FDOT encourages motorists to use the Florida 511 (FL 511) system for current traffic information such as congestion, incidents, message signs and more. The FL 511 system can also display traffic speed information to let motorists know the current flow of traffic on the detour routes. For more information, visit the website at FL511.com or download the Florida 511 Mobile App on Google Play or the Apple App Store.

For additional real-time updates on the Pensacola Bay Bridge, follow FDOT District Three on social media:

- Twitter: [@MyFDOT_NWFL](https://twitter.com/MyFDOT_NWFL)
- Facebook: [@MyFDOTNWFL](https://www.facebook.com/MyFDOTNWFL)

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