



Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority

One East Shore Road | P.O. Box 437 | Jamestown, Rhode Island 02835-0437

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RITBA ANNOUNCES EVENTS AND EXCITING PROJECTS AS PART OF NEWPORT PELL BRIDGE 50TH ANNIVERSARY

JAMESTOWN, R.I. – [The Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority \(RITBA\)](#)

is excited to announce events and future projects as part of the 50th Anniversary celebration for the Newport Pell Bridge. Construction on the bridge began on April 5, 1966, and it was officially opened to traffic on June 28, 1969.

In recognition of the 50th anniversary on June 28, 2019, RITBA plans to host a variety of festivities and celebrations throughout the year. Among the celebrations will be a jubilee dinner, a bridge rededication ceremony, a 1969 Antique Car Show/Bridge crossing and historical exhibits. Also, a “Top of the Tower Experience” will be included, where a few lucky winners will be able to ascend to one of the support towers of the bridge and take in the spectacular views. RITBA also plans to collaborate with higher education institutions such as URI, CCRI, RWU and RISD to create learning programs. No bridge toll dollars or gas tax revenue will be used to fund the celebration costs. Funding for the activities will be raised by private donations and the jubilee dinner.

As part of the celebration planning, RITBA is in the process of establishing a 50th Anniversary Celebration Committee. Evan Smith, President & CEO at Discover Newport has been appointed as Committee Chairman.

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“The Newport Pell Bridge is an invaluable asset to our state and particularly to Aquidneck Island. I am honored to be able to be part of this momentous celebration,” said Smith.

The celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Newport Pell Bridge is also a time of reflection. RITBA has been preparing for the next 50 years at RITBA. It has been reviewing its operations and practices. RITBA is currently in the final stages of a complete overhaul of the bridge and tolling system, as well as conducting a comprehensive customer service survey. RITBA is also reviewing and assessing all assets it owns or controls for opportunities for potential revenue generation on some of its assets.

For fifty years, RITBA has focused on moving vehicular transportation. RITBA believes it is prudent to continue that work and also expand its mission to connect people and communities. In that vein RITBA is giving consideration to the potential of installing bike/pedestrian paths on its bridges which currently do not have them – The Newport Pell Bridge, the Mount Hope Bridge and the Jamestown Verrazzano Bridge.

In an effort to monetize assets, RITBA is also considering the construction of an enclosed observatory on top of the 400 foot high west tower of the Newport Pell Bridge. This potential project would include an elevator running up the side of the tower to transport people to and from the observation deck. This would be a major attraction, enhance tourism and generate substantial annual revenue.

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“The impact these advancements will have on our state cannot be expressed enough. It’s a great time to reflect and celebrate this milestone and look back at the last fifty years, while also looking ahead to the future and the exciting things that could come,” stated Buddy Croft, Executive Director at the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority.

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