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SCUDDER FALLS (I-95) BRIDGE TURNS 50 YEARS OLD TOMORROW
*Construction on Bridge Ended October 29, 1959; Span Remained Closed to Traffic
Until June 1961 Due to Incomplete Highway Approaches*

NEW HOPE, PA – Tomorrow will mark the 50th anniversary of the completion of construction on the Scudder Falls (I-95) Bridge – the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission’s most heavily travelled span.

The 1,740-foot span, however, did not open immediately to traffic on October 29, 1959; that event did not occur until June 22, 1961 due to incomplete highway approaches on both sides of the river. The bridge was built by a contractor hired jointly by Pennsylvania and New Jersey and the two states annually paid the Commission to maintain and operate the bridge until 1984, when the two states transferred ownership of the Scudder Falls Bridge and 12 other non-toll Delaware River spans to the DRJTBC.

But while the bridge has reached the 50th anniversary of its construction completion date, it’s expected to be in service only a few more years. The Commission continues to lay the groundwork for the construction of a new bridge that would address the severe traffic-congestion problems and safety deficiencies at the current location between Ewing, New Jersey and Lower Makefield, PA. It’s uncertain, however, when those construction activities might begin. The Commission’s current best estimate is 2011.

“The one thing we know about the Scudder Falls Bridge’s 50 year milestone is that it won’t have many more anniversary dates in the future,” said Frank G. McCartney, executive director of the DRJTBC. “By any standard of measure today, this bridge is struggling to keep up with current traffic demands – especially during peak traffic periods.”

On the day when it was completed, the bridge was looked upon as the latest link in the Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, better known as the Interstate Highway System.

The road construction effort – the largest public works project in the nation’s history – embodied the heady times of 1959, a year when unemployment was 5.5 percent; Alaska and Hawaii joined the Union as the 49th and 50th states, respectively; the Barbie Doll was introduced to the nation’s post-war Baby Boom generation; and Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba.

Construction of the Scudder Falls (I-95) Bridge began on August 8, 1958, with the construction of the sub-structure – the piers and aprons -- of the bridge. The project was partially undertaken to replace the Yardley-Wilburtha Bridge, which was located 1.3 miles further downriver and had been severely damaged by the historic Delaware River flood of August 19, 1955. Three spans of the six-span structure had been carried away by the muddy flood waters and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers later replaced the missing spans with a Bailey-type bridge as a temporary measure until the Scudder Falls Bridge could be constructed and opened to traffic.

The Scudder Falls construction project took 1 year, 2 months, and 22 days to complete. It was one of six bridges that were built within the Commission's jurisdictional limits during the 1950s. The contractor on both the bridge's substructure and superstructure was the Conduit and Foundation Company of Philadelphia, Pa.

The bridge is a 10-span structure, consisting of two-span continuous steel-plate girders with alternating cantilever suspended spans and a concrete deck. The bridge was constructed using the following approximate amount of materials:

- 9,000 cubic yards or 18,000 tons of concrete. The concrete mixture included an estimated 14,625 barrels or 58,500 bags of cement.
- 3,265 tons (6,531,000 lbs) of steel in the superstructure of the bridge.
- 2,500 gallons of paint for three coats of paint of the steel work in the superstructure of the bridge.
- 596,000 pounds of reinforced steel rods in the bridge's superstructure.

The total construction cost of the entire structure was \$2,286,6110.40, about \$1,314.00 per linear foot of the bridge. The bridge was financed jointly by the State of New Jersey and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, with the federal government financing 50 percent of the total cost. The remaining 50 percent of the cost of the bridge was paid evenly by each state. The two states transferred ownership of the bridge under an agreement approved in 1984 and the Commission maintains and operates the span through revenues collected on its seven toll bridges.

Today, the bridge is the most heavily traveled span in the Commission's 20-bridge inventory in 2008, carrying an average 58,300 cars and trucks a day. Traffic volumes are projected to rise an additional 35 percent -- to 77,500 vehicles per day - by the year 2030. The bridge's roadway consists of two lanes in both the eastbound and westbound directions.

Over the course of the past five years, the Commission has been preparing for the I-95/Scudder Falls Bridge Improvement Project, the largest single construction project in the Commission's nearly 75-year history. The project will extend 4.4 miles along I-95 from PA Route 332 in Bucks County, PA to Bear Tavern Road in Mercer County, N.J. and will include a complete replacement of the existing four-lane Scudder Falls Bridge over the Delaware River. Project elements also include reconfiguration of the Taylorsville Road Interchange and the reconstruction and reconfiguration of the Route 29 interchange through the use of roundabouts.

The congestion and safety problems on the bridge were first articulated in the 1990 Traffic Study of Trenton-Morrisville Bridge Crossings over the Delaware River. In 2000, the Commission retained a consultant to conduct the Southerly Crossings Corridor Study, which examined ways to meet the future traffic demands of the Scudder Falls Bridge and the three nearby vehicular bridge crossings between Trenton, N.J. and Morrisville, Pa. This study attributed the Scudder Falls Bridge's congestion and safety problems to its narrow configuration and the close proximity of adjoining interchanges with entrance ramps merging onto I-95.

A more detailed explanation of the Commission's Recommended Preferred Alternative is available at a separate Web site created especially for the I-95/Scudder Falls Bridge Improvement Project. This site – www.scudderfallsbridge.com – also contains additional information and an updated status report. An icon link to the project site additionally may be found on the Commission's home page, www.drjtbc.org.

About the Commission

The Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission was formed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of New Jersey in 1934. It operates seven toll bridges and 13 toll-supported bridges, two of which are pedestrian-only spans. The Commission's jurisdiction extends along the Delaware River from the Philadelphia-Bucks County line north to the New Jersey/New York border. The bridges carried more than 140 million cars and trucks in 2008. For more information about the Commission and its various initiatives to deliver safer and more convenient bridge travel for its customers, please see: www.drjtbc.org.