

NEWS RELEASE

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Christopher D. Clement, Sr., Commissioner

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Planning Begins for Memorial Bridge Opening in Portsmouth, NH – Kittery, ME

The new Memorial Bridge in Portsmouth, NH – Kittery, ME is scheduled to open to traffic this summer. Exactly when is still to be determined as construction work continues.

Keith Cota, chief project manager for the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT), says it's important to note the exact opening date cannot be pinpointed until about ten days before the bridge will open.

"This is a complex piece of construction," Keith Cota says. "We want to make sure the bridge's lift mechanisms will work perfectly once the bridge is open to traffic. This will require a significant amount of testing."

Cota says once the company building the bridge, Archer Western Contractors (AWC), is satisfied the lift bridge is operating smoothly, NHDOT bridge maintenance crews will need specialized training to take over operations.

"This is standard for new bridge construction," says Steve DelGrosso, AWC project manager. "While we are working diligently to get the bridge completed as early as we can, we will not turn it over to the DOT until we are completely satisfied everything is in order. With so many details to complete, it's best not to predict too far ahead of time."

Meanwhile the New Hampshire and Maine Department of Transportations are jointly planning a special event at the bridge to mark its official opening.

"This is a much anticipated event and a big milestone," Keith Cota says. "We plan to have an official ribbon cutting, and we also want to give the community the opportunity to get on the bridge and just enjoy it. Initial plans are for the bridge to be first opened to pedestrians and bicyclists."

The bridge will likely be opened to motor vehicle traffic early the following morning.

"We know many people in the community are likely planning events of their own to coincide with the Memorial Bridge opening," Keith Cota says. "We want everyone to know our plans are progressing."

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Cota says any public events taking place off of the bridge construction site will require the usual municipal permits from the City of Portsmouth and the Town of Kittery.

Even though the bridge will be opened to traffic this summer, its approaches and other nearby areas will remain under construction into the fall. A rededication ceremony for the bridge is expected to take place on Veteran's Day in November.

“At that time, the commemorative plaques will be unveiled, landscaping adjacent to the bridge will be finished, and the new Memorial Bridge will be totally completed,” Keith Cota says.

Steve DelGrosso says in his experience it's not unusual to open a bridge to traffic before all of the contractor's adjacent work is completed, as long as the opening benefits the traveling public.

“Early in the process the NHDOT placed a high priority on getting the new bridge open as soon as possible,” DelGrosso says. “That's been our goal since the project was awarded to AWC.”

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