



GREATER NEW ORLEANS EXPRESSWAY COMMISSION

P.O. BOX 7656, METAIRIE LOUISIANA 70010
TELEPHONE 504-835-3118 * FAX 504-835-2518
www.thecauseway.us

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Contact:

Carlton Dufrechou

Office: (504) 835-3118

Cell: (504) 382-9030

cdufrechou@gnoec.org

The Lake Pontchartrain Causeway Bridge Celebrates its 65th Anniversary

Metairie, LA – On August 31st, the world's longest bridge over water will be 65 years old. The Causeway Bridge is 24-miles long and links the north and south shores of Lake Pontchartrain. The Causeway was considered a marvel of engineering when the first span was constructed in 1956. At the time, it was a two-way road with one lane heading north and the other south. In 1969, a second span was built with two lanes heading to the north, and the original span was repurposed for one way traffic in both lanes going to the south shore.

Because of annual inspections and continual maintenance, the Causeway has stood the test of time. The bridge has over 9,000 piles and almost 4,000 deck sections. Like a ship or airplane, a log is maintained for each component of the bridge to make certain that any potential problems are identified and corrected promptly. Ongoing maintenance is what makes the Causeway different from most of the aging highways and bridges nationally.

“For 65 years, the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway has been the great connector. It was a catalyst for the tremendous growth of the north shore and is still a commuter thoroughway. More important, the Causeway, like the lake, unites us a region.” said Carlton Dufrechou, General Manager.

Over the decades, the Causeway has been on the cutting edge for safety improvements including traffic monitoring cameras, message boards, traffic radio, text alerts to commuters, and other innovations. The latest and most significant improvements since the second bridge was built are 12 segmented shoulders which triple the Causeway's emergency stopping area and upgraded rails on original, 1956 bridge. After the shoulders were complete, crashes on the Causeway dropped 25%. The new rails have been hit five times since completed and prevent vehicles tumbling overboard.

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The GNOEC's mission remains to make all commuters trips across the Causeway safe and timely. It provides around the clock law enforcement and motorist aid. Annually, Causeway Police and the Motorist Assistance Patrol (MAP) respond to over 3,600 breakdowns and calls for assistance. Average response time is less than 4 minutes.

Police Chief Curt Franz added: "With a daily traffic flow of approximately 36,000 vehicles, we do much more than law enforcement. Our Police and MAP handle medical emergencies, move disabled vehicles out of traffic lanes, change tires, provide water for overheated engines, and occasionally even rescue boaters in distress."

Commission Chair Wanda Theriot noted: "We're here to keep our commuters safe. The most important thing commuters can do for safety is to pay attention while driving. The little things count whether driving on the Causeway or around the corner."

For more information, visit thecauseway.us website. There, you can learn facts about the bridge and safety tips; check on weather reports and traffic advisories; and sign up for alerts.