

Thursday, June 29, 1995

Cross Island Ramps Open

Contractor Gets \$1 Million for Timely Work

By PAMELA RESNICK

In the wake of lingering storms the night before the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and U.S. Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-Bayside) last Thursday heralded the opening of the newly reconstructed ramp on the Cross Island Parkway with an early morning ribbon-cutting ceremony.

The ramp, which had been closed to vehicular traffic since January, opened last week nearly three months ahead of schedule.

Frank Pascual, spokesman for the MTA's Bridge and Tunnel Division, said because the DeFoe Contracting Company of Mt. Vernon completed the work before July 4 and the actual Labor Day deadline they will receive a \$990,000 bonus.

Ackerman and Bridge and Tunnel workers gathered at 6:15 a.m. to baptize the new ramp before the morning rush hour started in earnest.

Pascual said the construction includes new lane striping, better signs and special horizontal grooves to keep vehicles from hydroplaning in rainy weather.

He said all the work on the drains and the emergency telephones is done.

Over the course of the project, Pascual said there were no major delays



U.S. Rep. Gary Ackerman (third from left) joined Bridge and Tunnel Authority representative Frank Pascual (right) and workers for a ribbon cutting ceremony last week on the Cross Island ramp.

and the weather was more than kind, forcing the crew to endure only one major snow storm during the winter.

Pascual said the total cost of the project amounted to \$7.1 million, very close to the projected \$6.9 million cost.

"That kind of increase is very small," Pascual said. "We came very close because we had a lot of time to develop the project and found few reasons to go

beyond that."

"The goal was to minimize the disruption, and it is safe to say we have achieved that," he said. "This represents time and funding well spent."

When the proposal for the reconstruction of the ramps was brought to Community Board 7 and Community Board 11 late last year, many community officials objected to the increased traffic

congestion the project was expected to cause on the local neighborhood streets.

Residents feared that the closing of the ramps to the Throgs Neck Bridge would force traffic onto the local streets in Bayside, leading to the Clearview Expressway and other alternate roadways, such as the Long Island Expressway and the Grand Central Parkway.

Ackerman was one of the leaders of the struggle to alter the plan in order to meet the community's needs, said Jordan Goldes, the congressman's press secretary.

Goldes said his office received more than 1,000 calls from local residents and commuters from throughout the congressman's district, which extends to parts of Suffolk County. The constituents were concerned about the effects the project would have.

The congressman was instrumental in encouraging the MTA to reduce the original timetable of the project from 18 months to six to eight months.

Despite the community's fears, Pascual said the project progressed quickly partly because of support from community boards, Queens Borough President Claire Shulman's office, Ackerman and others.

Goldes said that throughout the duration of the construction he received no complaints and the traffic situation seemed to be going well.

"Finishing this project so quickly is a major win for motorists and commuters all over our district," Goldes said.