



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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SHA REBUILDS AND WIDENS I-70 BRIDGE OVER CONOCOCHAEAGUE CREEK NEAR HAGERSTOWN

Motorists Should Expect Lane Shifting, Narrowing, Reduced Speed Limit Starting Late-Summer

(June 26, 2012) – The Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), beginning this week, is reconstructing and widening the I-70 bridge over Conococheague Creek, west of Hagerstown.

The approximately \$16.5 million, two-year-long project is part of SHA’s bridge preservation and replacement program. The dual bridge, constructed in 1965, is safe for the traveling public, but is showing signs of deterioration. The rehabilitation will extend its “life” by an additional 30 to 50 years. SHA is also widening each side of the existing bridge by 21 feet to include inner shoulders. This will give motorists space to pull over during emergencies and allow room for the potential future addition of a third lane.

“This major east-west route is a vital part of our nation’s interstate highway system and a critical link for the Hagerstown area,” said SHA Administrator Melinda B. Peters. “By rehabilitating and widening the bridge over Conococheague Creek now, SHA will ensure the highway remains safe and well-maintained for years to come.”

As part of the project, crews will replace the structural steel and the deck (driving surface), of the bridge, and will widen the support piers. When complete, each side of the bridge will be 51 feet wide. Weather permitting, the project will be complete by fall 2014.

All lanes will remain open during construction, with the exception of occasional temporary single-lane closures when necessary. For the first few months, crews will work below the bridge out of traffic. In late summer, construction crews will need to close the highway shoulder and shift and/or narrow lanes. Eventually, traffic will be shifted onto new bridge sections to the inside of the bridge while work occurs on the existing portions. The bridge carries an average volume of 56,000 vehicles per day.

Beginning in late summer, SHA will reduce the speed limit on I-70 in the work zone to 55 mph and deploy Maryland *SafeZones* automated speed enforcement (ASE). The ASE systems function like traditional law enforcement by measuring the speed of passing vehicles. However, *SafeZones* uses photography and laser technology to document speeders and a Maryland State Police officer later certifies violations. For the first three weeks, violators will be mailed warnings. After that, if a vehicle is recorded excessively speeding by 12 mph or more over the 55

mph speed limit, the registered owner will be mailed a \$40 civil citation. This project will mark SHA's first use of *SafeZones* in Western Maryland since the program was introduced in 2009.

“Work zones present dangerous conditions and challenges that require concentration and slower speeds,” Peters said. “Traditional police enforcement is not viable in work zones and where deployed, *SafeZones* has reduced speeding by 70 percent. Considering four out of five people injured or killed in work zone crashes are vehicle occupants, not workers, it benefits everyone to obey speed limits.”

SHA's contractor for the project is Concrete General of Gaithersburg. The project supports more than 100 jobs.

For more information and updates throughout the project, visit <http://tinyurl.com/conococheaguebridge>, or call SHA's District 6 office at 301-729-8400.

While SHA and its partners work hard to maintain safe traffic mobility in work zones, each driver needs to actively modify his or her driving style to help prevent crashes. Stay alert – look for reduced speed limits, narrow driving lanes and highway workers. Slow down and don't follow too closely. *Safer Driving. Safer Work Zones. For Everyone!*

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