

As of May 20, 2019, the right shoulder of the eastbound Newark Bay-Hudson County Extension of the New Jersey Turnpike will no longer be used as a travel lane.

Q & A



Answers to your questions about
the New Jersey Turnpike &
Garden State Parkway

Q *Why was the shoulder being used as a travel lane in the first place?*

A The New Jersey Department of Transportation closed the northbound lanes of the Pulaski Skyway in April 2014 in connection with a rehabilitation project. The eastbound Newark Bay-Hudson County Extension was an important alternate route from Newark to Jersey City and New York during the Skyway's four-year closure. The New Jersey Turnpike Authority effectively increased the eastbound capacity of the Extension by one-third by installing a Lane Control System that allowed the right shoulder to be used as a third travel lane at certain hours of certain days.

Newark Bay-Hudson County Extension

- Opened in 1956, five years after the mainline of the New Jersey Turnpike.
- Runs 8.2 miles between the mainline of the Turnpike and the Holland Tunnel approach in Jersey City.
- Built, owned, and operated by the Turnpike Authority but designated Interstate 78.
- More than half a billion dollars is being spent under five contracts in the current NJTA capital program to rehabilitate the Extension.



Q *Extra capacity? That sounds great. Why can't you continue using the shoulder as a travel lane?*

A The use of the shoulder as a travel lane was a temporary solution to the additional traffic caused by the Pulaski Skyway closure. The shoulder is needed for other purposes.

Q *Like what?*

A The Turnpike Authority has been replacing the deck and making other critical capital improvements on the Newark Bay-Hudson County Extension under a series of construction contracts over the past decade. The Extension was badly in need of those repairs. Some of the work was deferred because it would have conflicted with the Pulaski closure. With the northbound Pulaski now open, the deferred work on the Extension is about to get underway, and there is no way to perform that work without closing the right shoulder to traffic.

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Q *Will you allow the shoulder to be used as a third lane after the construction is complete?*

A This is a long-term construction project. The Turnpike Authority Board of Commissioners awarded a \$138.8 million contract to the Schiavone Construction Co. LLC of Secaucus in January. The work under this contract includes reconstruction of the bridge deck; repair and strengthening of the structural steel; and lighting, parapet, and drainage improvements, among other items. The contract covers five structures on the Extension between Interchanges 14 and 14B. The scheduled completion of the work is 2022.

Q *So will you reopen the shoulder to traffic in 2022?*

A No. The shoulder provides a safe spot out of traffic for disabled vehicles or vehicles involved in minor crashes. It also provides improved access to and from crash scenes for emergency and cleanup personnel. The structures on the Extension were designed and built for two lanes of traffic with a full shoulder in each direction. The short-term use of the shoulder as a travel lane was very effective in reducing the congestion from the Pulaski Skyway closure, but adding a third lane of traffic on the shoulder for the long-term would put a burden on the structures that they were not designed to handle.

Q *When will the use of the shoulder as a third travel lane cease?*

A On or about Monday, May 20, 2019. By the morning rush hour on that date, the shoulder will be behind a line of cones, and the overhead control system displays will show a continuous red X to indicate that travel is no longer permitted on the shoulder. (Please note that this is a revised date. The closure of the third lane was originally scheduled for April 29th. That was changed to May 20th to allow the Turnpike Authority more time to notify drivers that the temporary use of the shoulder as a third travel lane is ending and to provide them more time to make alternate travel plans.)

Q *Will traffic be affected? If so, how?*

A Yes, it will. Though the volume of vehicles on the Extension has dropped since the northbound Pulaski Skyway reopened, it remains higher than it was 10 years ago. The reduced capacity is expected to impact traffic on the Extension and on the mainline of the Turnpike. Motorists are strongly encouraged to avoid the area during peak travel periods by traveling on alternate routes or using mass transit, by telecommuting, or by rescheduling their trips to avoid the area during the morning and evening rush. Real-time information about travel conditions is available by calling 511 or downloading the SafeTripNJ app. Live views of the highway are available on the Traffic Cameras page of the Turnpike Authority website (<https://www.njta.com/travel-resources/camera-list>).



The Lane Control System on the NBHCE, which lets drivers know when the shoulder is open to traffic, will be decommissioned starting on or about May 6, 2019.