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## **I-80 eastbound initial testing completed revealing significant void in Wharton, Morris County I-80 westbound stable, eastbound work area expanded**

**(Trenton)** – Initial testing on I-80 near Exit 34 has been completed revealing a significant void under the eastbound lanes in Wharton, Morris County. The Department has expanded the work area on I-80 eastbound for further investigation, as noted in [previous updates](#). There are no immediate concerns about the stability of I-80 westbound.

The new void, which is an empty space or cavity that exists underground, is located underneath the center lane of I-80 eastbound, near where the road depression was observed on February 10. The area near the void has been secured to ensure the safety of the crews working to repair the roadway. This void will require a more extensive and lengthy repair than originally thought. Until a design is finalized, it is difficult to determine an exact completion date.

Crews are continuing proactive drilling and grouting operations to stabilize other portions of the roadway and will continue to work 24 hours a day to complete these repairs as safely and efficiently as possible.

“After finishing the initial testing, the good news is there are no immediate concerns about the stability of I-80 westbound. The bad news is a significant void was identified underneath the center lane of I-80 eastbound, which will require an extensive and robust repair,” **NJDOT Commissioner Fran O’Connor** said. “It is going to take some time to design a repair that will ensure the long-term integrity and safety of the roadway. It is important that we act now to make lasting repairs, so we don’t have to come back any time soon.

“We understand the importance of this highway and the disruption this emergency closure has caused on travelers and the local community. The Department, in coordination with our local partners, are exploring options on how to improve traffic flow in the area during construction. We appreciate the public’s understanding and the cooperation of the New Jersey State Police and local officials as repairs continue.

“Crews will continue working around the clock until the road is stabilized and safe to reopen. The nature of the work is complex and time-consuming, making it hard to estimate when work will be complete,” Commissioner O’Connor said.

"While NJDOT crews were working to repair the initial sinkhole on I-80 eastbound, a separate, deeper void was discovered in the same area. This new development, along with the discovery of the initial sinkhole, make it clear that the fast action and vigilance of the New Jersey State Troopers who identified the initial road depression, was critical in avoiding a potential serious situation. For that we are all grateful," **Senator Anthony M. Bucco** said. "We are now working closely with Commissioner O'Connor and his team to fully assess the new damage caused by this deeper void and prioritize the necessary repairs to safely reopen the interstate.

"I understand how frustrating this situation has been for commuters, residents, and businesses, and I want to thank everyone for their extraordinary patience as we work through the testing and repairs. The safety of our residents remains my top priority, and NJDOT crews are doing everything they can to resolve this as quickly and safely as possible.

"Lastly, I want to give special recognition to Commissioner O'Connor and the NJDOT team. Their tireless efforts, as well as their collaboration with local officials and myself, have been invaluable in keeping the public informed and guiding us through this challenge together."

"While the discovery of a significant void means repairs will take longer than expected, the safety of our residents remains our top priority," **Assemblywoman Aura K. Dunn** said. "I want to thank the New Jersey State Police for their swift action in identifying the initial sinkhole, which prevented a potential disaster and saved lives. I appreciate NJDOT and all involved for their continued hard work to resolve this issue. Their dedication ensures that our infrastructure will be safe and reliable for the long term."

## **UPDATE**

Proactive drilling and grouting are ongoing. The work area has expanded from 90 locations to approximately 135 locations. As of this morning, Thursday, February 27, 51 locations have been drilled, and 36 locations have been filled with grout. These areas are not all voids, but locations requiring investigation. The number of locations that require further investigation may be adjusted as work progresses.

This proactive drilling and grouting help identify and address potential problem areas before they develop into voids, surface-level depressions, or sinkholes. This type of operation requires a high degree of precision and measurements. To do so safely, the contractor is proceeding with extreme caution in the affected area. There are multiple drill rigs working 24 hours a day. This is a time-consuming process as it requires the operator to drill down and fill the shaft with grout. The purpose of this is to firm up the base of the road, which is done when the grout spreads into any existing voids.

## **TRAFFIC MITIGATION**

NJDOT is working closely with local officials and the New Jersey State Police to coordinate detours and alternate routes in order to minimize the disruption of additional traffic in the neighboring communities. We ask motorists to avoid the area, plan extra travel time, and be patient while testing and repairs are ongoing.

State Police are manually controlling several traffic signals on Route 10 and Route 46, which serve as alternate routes. They will continue to do so on weekdays during the morning and evening rush hours to improve traffic flow. NJDOT also has adjusted the timing of several signals on Route 15, which are being monitored by the State Police, to help ease congestion. The Department will continue to monitor traffic conditions and make adjustments as necessary to mitigate delays.

In addition, NJDOT is using technology to send messages to commercial truckers to provide information about the closure, detour, and alternate routes. The Department is also using digital messaging signs and working with our regional transportation partners to share information so drivers can make informed decisions about potential alternate routes to take.

### **DETOURS AND ALTERNATE ROUTES**

All I-80 eastbound traffic is currently being detoured at Exit 34 and the following detour remains in place until further notice:

#### **I-80 eastbound Exit 34 Detour:**

- Motorists on I-80 eastbound are being directed to take Exit 34 to Route 15/Wharton/Dover/Sparta
- At the end of the ramp, stay right following signs for Route 15/Jefferson/Dover/Sparta/Picatinny Arsenal
- **Stay in the right lane on North Main Street** following signs for Route 15 North/Jefferson/Sparta
- **Bear right toward Route 15 northbound/Picatinny Arsenal**
- At the traffic signal, merge onto Route 15 northbound
- Stay left, following signs for Pondview Drive/U and Left Turns
- Using both lanes, make a U-turn at the Pondview Drive traffic signal and merge onto Route 15 southbound
- Stay left to take the exit to I-80 eastbound

**Traffic is advised to use Exit 28 to take Route 10 eastbound or Route 46 eastbound as an alternate route to avoid the area. This exit is several miles before the closure:**

#### **Route 10 eastbound Alternate Route:**

- Motorists on I-80 eastbound are advised to take Exit 28/Route 46 eastbound to Route 10/Ledgewood/Lake Hopatcong, *which is several miles before the closure*
- Continue on Route 46 eastbound
- Stay right to take Route 10 eastbound
- Take the exit to I-287 northbound
- Stay right to take the ramp to I-80 eastbound

**Route 46 eastbound Alternate Route:**

- Motorists on I-80 eastbound are advised to take Exit 28/Route 46 eastbound to Route 10/Ledgewood/Lake Hopatcong, *which is several miles before the closure*
- Continue on Route 46 eastbound
- Stay in the left two lanes to turn left at the traffic signal to continue on Route 46 eastbound
- Turn left onto Route 15 northbound in Dover back to I-80  
or
- Continue on Route 46 eastbound for about 12 miles and stay left for I-80 eastbound

Motorists are encouraged to check NJDOT's traffic information website [www.511nj.org](http://www.511nj.org) for construction updates and real-time travel information. For NJDOT news follow us on X (Twitter) [@NewJerseyDOT](https://twitter.com/NewJerseyDOT), on the [NJDOT Facebook page](#), or Instagram [@NewJersey.DOT](https://www.instagram.com/NewJersey.DOT).

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