



STATE OF MICHIGAN
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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2020 Mackinac Bridge Walk suspended

May 13, 2020 -- Echoing a focus on safety that led it to bar public traffic from the bridge during the Annual Bridge Walk beginning in 2017, the Mackinac Bridge Authority (MBA) today suspended this year's event due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The unanimous board decision came at a special meeting this afternoon, conducted online due to the pandemic. The meeting was available for public viewing and commenting through YouTube and Livestream.

Acknowledging the event's benefit to Straits community economies, board Chairman Patrick "Shorty" Gleason made it clear that the suspension is for the 2020 event only and said he currently expects the walk would resume in 2021.

"We recognize that September is months away but the event requires months of planning and early expenditures," Gleason said. "Like organizers who have postponed festivals and other summer events, we needed to make a decision now."

Based on science and the forecasts from top medical officials, board members observed that it is likely the pandemic will be a health and safety concern, particularly for events that attract large crowds, for the foreseeable future. "We can't in good conscience continue with an event we know draws people from across our state and beyond, and puts them shoulder-to-shoulder for hours, when medical advice strenuously advises against such gatherings," Gleason said.

MBA Vice-Chairman Matt McLogan, who chairs the authority's finance committee noted that toll revenues have been declining the past two months along with traffic volumes, diminishing funds available for the more than \$300,000 in expenses the MBA incurs for the walk.

"The walk is a wonderful tradition, which I have consistently supported. But the MBA must hold the line on expenses wherever it can now because we don't know when or if regular traffic volumes will resume," McLogan said. "Pausing the Walk for 2020 is the responsible course of action."

The board heard several comments from the public, both opposing and supporting suspension of the walk.

Each year, between 25,000 and 57,000 people from several states and countries have come to the Mackinac Bridge for the Annual Bridge Walk, which has taken place since 1958, the year after the bridge opened to traffic. In recent years, since the bridge has been closed to traffic during the event, 25,000 to 30,000 people have participated.

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