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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2019

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With the north tower complete, Mackinac Bridge south tower repainting to begin

April 16, 2019 -- Now that repainting of the Mackinac Bridge's north tower is complete, a two-year project to do the same to the south tower is set to begin next week.

Contractor Seaway Painting of Livonia, which completed the 2017-18 project to strip the north tower down to bare metal and repaint it, was awarded the latest low-bid contract to repaint the bridge's south tower. As with the north tower, this will be the first time the south tower has been completely stripped and repainted the iconic ivory color.

"Right now, we expect the repainting to begin sometime the week of April 22, as weather allows," said Mackinac Bridge Authority Executive Secretary Bob Sweeney. "As with the north tower repainting, this work will require lane closures on the bridge near the tower, and some intermittent closures while Seaway stages equipment, so we ask that customers use extra caution when crossing."

Closures on the northbound lanes will be lifted on Fridays and on southbound lanes on Sundays during peak traffic weekends. Lane closures also will be removed as needed for other high-traffic volume times, such as holidays.

The project will begin with stripping and painting on some of the tower's interior "cells," and installation of an enclosure for painting the outside of the tower. The portions of the tower below the bridge deck are expected to be painted in 2020.

The original paint is lead-based and Seaway is required to contain 100 percent of the paint as it is removed and ship it to an appropriate landfill facility. The new paint, which is zinc-based, is expected to last at least 35 years, with periodic maintenance.

The south tower contract is for just less than \$6.5 million, and Seaway is required to complete the project by Dec. 31, 2020. The contract to repaint the north tower was just less than \$6.3 million.

Sweeney said that until the 1970s, the bridge authority hired contractors to spot paint the bridge towers as needed. Since the late '70s, MBA employees have handled that task.

Construction on the Mackinac Bridge began in May 1954 and the completed structure was opened to traffic on Nov. 1, 1957. The MBA's sole source of funding is from tolls and fees collected, with all revenue used to maintain, operate and protect the bridge.

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