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# MACKINAC BRIDGE AUTHORITY

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Mackinac Bridge north tower to get a new paint job**

**March 30, 2017** -- For the first time in its 60-year history, one of the Mackinac Bridge's iconic ivory towers will be stripped down to bare metal and repainted.

Beginning April 6, contractors for the Mackinac Bridge Authority (MBA) will begin a nearly two-year project to remove the original paint from the bridge's north tower and repaint it. Contractor Seaway Painting, which most recently repainted the bridge's south approach span, was awarded the contract with a low bid of just less than \$6.3 million.

"Fans of the bridge should be relieved to know that when this project is done, the tower will still be the same classic ivory that everyone recognizes," said MBA Executive Secretary Bob Sweeney. "Apart from brightening the appearance of the bridge, a quality painting project goes a long way toward ensuring the bridge is protected from the elements."

The project will begin with stripping and painting on some of the tower's interior "cells," followed by installation of an enclosure on the outside of the tower in late April or early May.

The original paint is lead-based, and Seaway is required to contain 100 percent of the paint as it is removed, test it, 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.

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.

Seaway is required to complete the project by Dec. 31, 2018, though Sweeney said they hope to get most of the painting done this year, if the weather allows.

During painting, the contractor will need to close the outside two lanes of the bridge near the north tower to stage equipment. Sweeney said closures on the northbound lanes will be lifted on Fridays and on southbound lanes on Sundays during the peak traffic weekends. Lane closures also will be removed as needed for other high traffic volume times, such as holidays.

The MBA also plans to have the south tower stripped and painted beginning in 2019. The contract for that project will go out for bids in early 2019.

Construction on the Mackinac Bridge began in May 1953, 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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