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## **New Liberty Memorial Bridge now open to traffic**

**Bismarck** – The old Liberty Memorial Bridge closed permanently at 11 a.m. Thursday morning, and traffic was diverted to two lanes of the new Liberty Memorial Bridge, pending a formal ribbon cutting later in the season.

“When the bridge was opened in 1922 it was the first permanent crossing of the Missouri River in North Dakota and was christened Liberty Memorial in honor of World War I soldiers from our state,” said Governor John Hoeven. “The old Liberty Memorial Bridge has served our state well, and the new one will continue to honor our veterans.”

The old Liberty Memorial Bridge was built as a final link in the transcontinental highway called the Red Trail, later called the National Parks Highway and then Highway 10. The bridge is 2,550 feet long and consists of three identical 476-foot long steel truss spans.

The new Liberty Memorial bridge is 2,369 feet long and its design incorporates two plazas and five overlooks as a tribute to military veterans. “The new bridge will recognize and honor all branches of the military and those who serve our country,” said Francis Ziegler, North Dakota Department of Transportation director. “We are pleased with the progress on the new bridge. Construction workers have worked diligently through adverse conditions over the past two years, only stopping work one day during subzero weather conditions.”

A formal ceremony for the new bridge will be held when the four lane project is completed later this fall. Traffic was rerouted for five hours on Thursday as work crews prepared the new Liberty Memorial Bridge for traffic transfer. Two lanes of the new four-lane bridge were opened on Thursday afternoon. The bridge project now moves into Phase II as crews work to complete the new bridge by late fall. In order to finish work on the remaining two lanes, the west end of the existing bridge must be removed.

Removal of the west end approach area of the old bridge will start immediately. Removal of the rest of the old bridge will be completed incrementally as sections will be taken down throughout the next few months.