

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Historic Veterans Drive Improvement Project Is Ahead Of Schedule, Government House Says

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ST. THOMAS -- The Veterans Drive Improvement Project, the single largest road construction project in the history of the U.S. Virgin Islands, is ahead of schedule, Government House said Tuesday.

The St. Thomas project, which broke ground in May this year, adds two lanes and a new pedestrian promenade along the harbor, supported by a strong sea wall. The project is expected to ease traffic congestion and improve safety for motorists and pedestrians. An additional sidewalk along the north side will help to enhance the walking and sightseeing experience for residents and visitors, according to the Government House release.

Department of Public Works Commissioner Nelson Petty and the department's Design Program Manager Jomo McClean, along with a team from American Bridge Company, reported to Governor Kenneth Mapp Friday that the project was proceeding quickly with approximately a third of the seawall installed, according to Government House.

"This weekend we will be receiving another 90 wall pieces so they can continue with the installation, which is expected to be completed early next year," Mr. McClean said.

The project to modernize and revive the downtown Charlotte Amalie waterfront was first envisioned 34 years ago, receiving its first environmental approval in October 1984. After innumerable re-evaluations and delays, it was finally approved in summer 2017 with Mr. Mapp's support.

About \$42 million, much from already appropriated federal aid, will fund the current phase of the project, which will take just over three years to complete.

"We gave the governor an update, we explained to him the progress, what the contractors are doing and what the timeline is," Mr. Petty said.

Government House said the American Bridge Company is an experienced construction company whose projects include a significant proportion of the world's large bridges, marine installations, and other complex structures. The company has built some of the world's most notable bridges including the Tappan Zee, Verrazano-Narrows, Mackinac Straits, Bayonne, San Francisco-Oakland Bay East and West Spans, Angostura, 25th of April, New River Gorge, and Sunshine Skyway.

The Veterans Drive project is part of the Mapp administration's larger mission to reconstruct and improve the territory and to position the U.S. Virgin Islands as a premier, world class destination, according to Government House.

The release comes six days before a runoff election, as the governor attempts to build support in St. Thomas, where he was roundly defeated by gubernatorial candidate Albert Bryan during the November 6 General Election.