

## **The Chesapeake Bay Bridge–Tunnel**

The Chesapeake Bay Bridge–Tunnel (CBBT) is a 23-mile (37 km) fixed link crossing at the mouth of Chesapeake Bay in the U.S. state of Virginia. It connects Northampton County on the Delmarva Peninsula with Virginia Beach, which is part of the Hampton Roads metropolitan area. The bridge–tunnel originally combined 12 miles (19 km) of trestle, two 1-mile-long (1.6 km) tunnels, four artificial islands, four high-level bridges, approximately 2 miles (3.2 km) of causeway, and 5.5 miles (8.9 km) of approach roads—crossing the Chesapeake Bay and preserving traffic on the Thimble Shoals and Chesapeake shipping channels. It replaced vehicle ferry services that operated from South Hampton Roads and from the Virginia Peninsula from the 1930s. Financed by toll revenue bonds, the bridge–tunnel was opened on April 15, 1964,[1] and remains one of only ten bridge–tunnel systems in the world, three of which are located in Hampton Roads, Virginia.

Since it opened, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge–Tunnel has been crossed by more than 100 million vehicles.[2] The CBBT complex carries U.S. Route 13, the main north–south highway on Virginia's Eastern Shore, and, as part of the East Coast's longstanding Ocean Highway, provides the only direct link between the Eastern Shore and South Hampton Roads regions, as well as an alternate route to link the Northeast and points in between with Norfolk and the Carolinas. The bridge–tunnel saves motorists 95 miles (153 km) and 1½ hours on a trip between Virginia Beach/Norfolk and points north and east of the Delaware Valley without going through the traffic congestion in the Baltimore–Washington Metropolitan Area. The \$15 toll is partially offset by some savings of tolls in Maryland and Delaware on I-95. From 1995 to 1999, at a cost of almost \$200 million, the capacity of the above-water portion was increased to four lanes. An upgrade of the two-lane tunnels was proposed but has not been carried out.

The crossing was officially named the Lucius J. Kellam Jr. Bridge–Tunnel in August 1987 after one of the civic leaders who had long worked for its development and operation; however, it continues to be best known as the Chesapeake Bay Bridge–Tunnel. The complex was built by and is operated by the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel District, a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia governed by the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel Commission. Costs are recovered through toll collections. In 2002, a Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) study commissioned by the Virginia General Assembly concluded that "given the inability of the state to fund future capital requirements of the CBBT, the District and Commission should be retained to operate and maintain the Bridge–Tunnel as a toll facility in perpetuity."