

Curb Enthusiasm Episode 13 Transcript

00;00;01;12 - 00;00;30;11

Emily Weidenhof

Welcome to Curb Enthusiasm. I'm Emily Weidenhof. Our guest today is deputy commissioner of the Bridges division at the New York City Department of Transportation. He oversees all aspects of the design, construction, maintenance and operation of nearly 800 bridges and tunnels in New York City, including the Brooklyn Bridge, the Ed Koch Queensboro Bridge, and the Williamsburg Bridge. It is my pleasure to welcome Paul Schwartz to the podcast.

00;00;30;13 - 00;01;01;04

Emily Weidenhof

Welcome, Paul. So excited to talk with you today. I love these conversations with amazing people doing amazing work at D.O.T. who are just, you know, a few floors away. You oversee an amazing portfolio of bridges here at D O T, but also an amazing team that cares for those bridges, over 650 people. If the bridges division was a sports team, what would their mascot be?

00;01;01;07 - 00;01;23;08

Paul Schwartz

So, thank you. I'm really excited to be here. And I'm. You're right. I'm supported by an amazing team. Very lucky to have, like, 650 people from admin, engineers, skilled trades. I mean, we can do it all. We have hundreds of years of experience. It's a great honor to really be in that role. So, a long time ago, before I got here.

00;01;23;08 - 00;01;25;20

Paul Schwartz

So, call it like a generation, a D O T generation ago.

00;01;25;20 - 00;01;26;27

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah.

00;01;26;27 - 00;01;40;07

Paul Schwartz

They were known as the Skywalkers. That was like their thing. Probably coming from the fact that, you know, we would climb up cables, and we have ironworkers and painters and others who have to go up the bridge to do work and that was like a moniker was the Skywalkers.

00;01;40;09 - 00;01;44;28

Paul Schwartz

So, I would say if that was our mascot, that would be that would be our mascot. Yeah.

00;01;45;05 - 00;01;59;24

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Emily Weidenhof

Amazing. Awesome. Definitely a lot of people, at D O T see that, getting to walk on some of our bridges and the cables as one of the greatest experiences, here at the agency.

00;01;59;27 - 00;02;02;26

Paul Schwartz

Yeah, it's. If you can get up there, it's great.

00;02;02;26 - 00;02;19;15

Paul Schwartz

It's, you know, the job, typically, for me, my role is more like mentally challenging. That's the physically challenging part of the job. Also mental because of the nerves. But, getting up to the top of some of these bridges and just being able to look out at the city, how the city's changed over the past couple decades.

00;02;19;15 - 00;02;34;07

Paul Schwartz

It's been amazing. Recently, I was able to go up to the close to the top of the Queensboro Bridge and walk up the eye bars, which was quite an experience, a bit challenging, but really, really cool to get up there and to see, see the whole kind of city laid out before for you.

00;02;34;09 - 00;02;34;17

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah, fantastic

00;02;34;17 - 00;02;48;06

Paul Schwartz

It's pretty special. And we have a great team that maintains these things so that we can do this stuff and, you know, make sure that the bridges are safe because there's a bunch of things up there that we need to keep an eye on to make sure that the bridges are functioning the right way.

00;02;48;08 - 00;02;54;08

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah. So, let's talk about that. Can you share the kind of scope and extent of the bridge portfolio?

00;02;54;12 - 00;03;08;24

Paul Schwartz

Oh, absolutely. So, New York City is comprised of about 2200 bridges. A bridge is not just the East River bridges or the Verrazano or the GW. Right. It's any sort of span, as we call it, that is greater than 20ft.

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00;03;08;26 - 00;03;43;06

Paul Schwartz

And so, of the 2200 bridges across the whole city, New York City D.O.T. maintains 813 bridges. What's great is that are so free, so much like the state D O T's as well. But unlike the MTA and others, we don't charge a toll. So we've got 813 bridges, and they range from the East River bridges, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Williamsburg, and Queensboro to 23 moveable bridges that go over, different rivers and creeks that have to move to allow navigable traffic to get through to small bridges in the community that you wouldn't even think is a bridge just walking over.

00;03;43;07 - 00;04;04;12

Paul Schwartz

We also maintain about 53 culverts. And you can think of any of a culvert as a small structure, like a box or a tube that's conveying water underneath, as well as about 650 retaining walls and four vehicular tunnels. So, the battery Park underpass, Park Avenue Tunnel, First Avenue Tunnel and West Street underpass are our tunnels as well.

00;04;04;17 - 00;04;06;19

Paul Schwartz

So, we have a pretty wide variety.

00;04;06;22 - 00;04;23;22

Emily Weidenhof

Another incredibly iconic space is the Brooklyn Bridge and how it meets Manhattan at the Brooklyn Banks. Can you talk a little bit about all of the amazing work, that just went into this last, refresh of the Brooklyn Bridge?

00;04;23;26 - 00;04;28;06

Emily Weidenhof

The Brooklyn Bridge, we just finished up about a \$300 million contract.

00;04;28;08 - 00;04;46;27

Paul Schwartz

And what we did there was we reinforced the arch blocks. So those are the arch structures that support the approach roadways to the actual bridge itself. Those are the iconic, like, limestone arches with the brick infill walls. And a lot of work was done inside of them to just make sure that structurally they would be sound.

00;04;46;29 - 00;05;06;21

Paul Schwartz

And then also we did jet routing to support them. So, when the Brooklyn Bridge was built, that was at Beekman place, was a swamp, and it was like the lowest point of Manhattan at the time. But they still put a bridge out there. And over time, just to make it more resilient to earthquakes or seismic activity, we wanted to firm up that underside.

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00;05;06;24 - 00;05;31;06

Paul Schwartz

So, we did some jet routing there. And then we also took care of all the masonry. So, we cleaned and repainted and repaired the masonry bits. Growing up, I thought the Brooklyn Bridge was brown. The towers were brown. And then when we actually cleaned them, you could see that this beautiful gray color with, like, strands of blue and pinks and, you know, the effort that went into picking each piece of granite and laying it out is really marvelous.

00;05;31;07 - 00;05;48;19

Paul Schwartz

So, I would encourage people to take a stroll and take a look at those towers, and then all of the work that we do on our major infrastructure projects, it takes time, and I know we're in the community and it can be frustrating at times. And so that plaza area was closed for quite some time to support this work.

00;05;48;22 - 00;06;04;08

Paul Schwartz

So as part of this, we were happy enough to be able to open it back up to the community, restore the bricks to the way they were when it was built closer, you know, in the 70s. And, you know, I think we've seen a lot of life back there that hasn't been there for quite some time, which is exciting to see.

00;06;04;10 - 00;06;30;19

Emily Weidenhof

Absolutely. Yeah. It's been astonishing not only the, the beauty, and kind of history of that space, but now that the construction fences are down, there's so much connectivity there, so much walking and cycling and moving through the space. So, I think, you know, we're very excited that that has galvanized a lot of energy with the Gotham Park team and, the skateboarding community.

00;06;30;21 - 00;06;53;14

Paul Schwartz

Tony Hawk and Steve Rodriguez, you know, have a lot of a lot of history and love for, for this space. And so, it's exciting to work with them to continue to think about how we, we care for this infrastructure and make it a place that we can celebrate. Because not all bridges have been constructed as beautifully as the Brooklyn Bridge, now.

00;06;53;14 - 00;07;17;20

Paul Schwartz

Yeah, and that'd be great from my perspective. Right? It's really celebrated the infrastructure. And, you know, the bridges we often think about, it's connecting communities and less thought in the past has been given to how do they work within the community and underneath. Right. Yeah. And I think, you know, not every place, but with

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the right partners and with the right activities and the right people who actually care, you know, we can make some of these things a little bit livelier and integrate that into the community.

00;07;17;22 - 00;07;27;26

Paul Schwartz

And so then for the time that we don't need it for the critical infrastructure work, right, we can give something back to the community knowing that in time it'll be there for us again when we need to do the major maintenance that's required.

00;07;27;29 - 00;07;36;16

Emily Weidenhof

Right. You see so much more than the public sees about what it takes to maintain our bridges.

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Emily Weidenhof

What are some of the biggest challenges that are maybe invisible to the general public? But, you know, you and your team are dealing with on a day-to-day basis.

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Paul Schwartz

I think the one thing that people have to understand is that, you know, bridges move, right? And I don't think people realize that. Yeah. And the longer the bridge, the more movement there is.

00;07;56;09 - 00;08;20;16

Paul Schwartz

Right. So, whether it's your car or your bicycle, there's certain activities that you need to do to make sure that moving parts stay moving. So, on our East River bridges, we've got a pretty, robust maintenance program. We use our in-house trades to do expansion, joint work, lubrication of the cables. We do a lot of maintenance in all of the surface of the drainage system to make sure that things, water flows where it's supposed to go.

00;08;20;22 - 00;08;43;08

Paul Schwartz

Right? And debris is not in the way, and it doesn't block the way that the bridge is supposed to function. And we also maintain these travelers there on the deck platforms that allow us to inspect it and gain access. Right. And so, there's this base level of maintenance that we do. And then you have all the repairs. And so, finding the resources to do to do this, the time of day, no one likes to sit in traffic,

00;08;43;10 - 00;08;43;23

Emily Weidenhof

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Right.

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Paul Schwartz

So, you know, getting us out there at the right time to do the work, balancing that work, doing it across city are all major challenges. Outside of the maintenance side, you know, we have this pretty robust capital plan in the next ten years. We are budgeted for about \$17 billion worth of D O T Bridge work. And one of the cool things is that we also do work on behalf of Department of Parks.

00;09;06;13 - 00;09;39;03

Paul Schwartz

So, of the 813 structures, a number of them are Parks Department, and that's another 2 billion. And so, we are responsible for this whole life cycle. And going into these major projects, we we're going to be touching about 300 bridges in the next ten years. And that's a variety of, of those, you know, component-based contracts. So, when we do the maintenance work and we gets past the point where we can do it in-house, we then set out specific contracts that address certain components, changing out certain elements, right, to make sure that the overall bridge can last longer.

00;09;39;06 - 00;09;59;26

Paul Schwartz

And then when you kind of exhaust that, then you go to your major rehabs, right. So those 300 structures are touched in many different ways. And that includes painting which is a really important thing. Right. All the salt that's used corrodes all the steel. And that paint is what gives us that protection. So making sure we're aggressive with our painting to protect it is that first line of defense.

00;09;59;29 - 00;10;04;22

Emily Weidenhof

Right. And you don't use salt on the East River bridges. Right. For that that very reason.

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Emily Weidenhof

Exactly. For that very reason, we have a lot of backing from the federal government, thankfully, to help us put down what we call non corrosive chemicals. Right. So things that don't degrade acetate based chemicals, so we get out there earlier.

00;10;18;20 - 00;10;36;13

Paul Schwartz

So while sanitation is doing the whole city we're taking care of these two bridges and the BQE between Atlantic and Sands. And we're putting out a liquid to prevent ice formation. And should it occur, we do have a solid chemical that we can put down to dissipate the ice. And that's a really intense operation with some specialized equipment.

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00;10;36;20 - 00;11;07;17

Emily Weidenhof

And I do think that's, again, a super fascinating range that you deal with the long term capital planning, where you're really thinking diligently about priorities and needs over, you know, a massive portfolio. But then the emergencies that happen, we have vehicles on our bridges, obviously, like you mentioned, but also pedestrians and cyclists. And then sometimes we have incidents like the Mexican ship that was a big emergency that that your team responded to.

00;11;07;19 - 00;11;27;10

Paul Schwartz

Yeah, that was interesting. We've we've definitely had truck hits in the past and we've had some sailboat hits, but nothing quite like that. The way we got the call was I think, you know, it was a Saturday night and, I got a call from actually a colleague of ours who was out hanging out in Dumbo and said, you'll never believe what just happened.

00;11;27;10 - 00;11;51;14

Paul Schwartz

Sent along some video. So we are lucky enough to have emergency responders who come to the officers. Yeah. And they'll head out. Right. If there's an event over something like this. So I called up one of our key duty officers, Andy Hong and, we went out to location. As we're out there, we're trying to piece together all these social media feeds that people are giving us, cause you had videos from Dumbo, videos from Brooklyn Bridge Park, you know, trying to figure out where it is.

00;11;51;16 - 00;12;10;26

Paul Schwartz

And, we were able to actually find the location of where we thought the the boat struck the bridge. So we're out there with flashlights and in a closed lane of traffic, and we're trying to figure out exactly where it is, and we see the scratches and we see what's going on. And then we took a look underneath the bridge and saw some of the damage to the travelers, which I mentioned before the inspection platforms.

00;12;10;28 - 00;12;30;23

Paul Schwartz

We were very lucky. There was no significant damage to the bridge itself. We have some work to do on the traveler, but the bridge itself was fine and we were able to keep it open for traffic. And the next day, so one of the things to note is that the bridges are inspected once every two years, and the state D.O.T. will do those inspections for the roadway bridges.

00;12;30;25 - 00;12;48;22

Paul Schwartz

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So the next morning the state came out and they have full sunlight now, and they're doing this inspection. And they came back and said, nope, you guys are right. We're good. No problems. And then just as an added measure, security NTSB was doing their investigation. So they took a look at it from the bridge side and confirmed the findings.

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Paul Schwartz

So we were very lucky. But it was also a good example of, you know, professionals doing their job to the fullest extent and keeping people safe. And, you know, with as least of an impact to the public as possible. So I applaud everyone's efforts in that response.

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Emily Weidenhof

Absolutely. Yeah. So grateful. So grateful for the team.

00;13;08;15 - 00;13;26;13

Emily Weidenhof

So you mentioned the state and the biannual inspection process. There actually a lot of different a lot of different ownerships. Could you talk about who else is involved in caring for our bridges? And kind of how did some of those relationships come to be?

00;13;26;16 - 00;13;31;00

Paul Schwartz

Yeah, 2200 bridges is a lot to maintain in a small space. Right?

00;13;31;03 - 00;13;51;03

Paul Schwartz

So the state owns a lot of bridges that would be considered, like on state arterials or highway systems, you know, interstates. So not every case, but a majority of their bridges are going to be at that level. And then on the smaller, smaller streets, not state routes, not interstates, that falls to the locality. And that's that's us as the city.

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Paul Schwartz

And that's why a majority of our bridges are, you know, smaller. They're, you know, in community type bridges. But then after the east river bridges were built, there was a need to also make these really, really big investments to connect boroughs. And you see that at the Verrazano or connect states like you see at the George Washington Bridge.

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Paul Schwartz

And so there was a different model used for those. So instead of using our taxpayer dollars of the city bonding out and creating money to do these major projects, they created these

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authorities. So we have the MTA, which has the T B T A, or the Tri Borough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, or you have the Port Authority, which is appointed by, a board.

00;14;29;03 - 00;14;46;08

Paul Schwartz

It's a board appointed by both governors. And they've created these entities that would basically bond for the projects, build them, and then pay off those bonds through a tolling process. And so that's one of the reasons why you have to pay to go over the Verrazzano. But you don't have to pay to go over the Brooklyn Bridge. Yeah.

00;14;46;10 - 00;15;04;16

Emily Weidenhof

So all of these jurisdictions around, a city that's surrounded by surrounded by water. What was the history that led us from a city of, of waterways and boats and piers to so many bridges?

00;15;04;16 - 00;15;13;21

Paul Schwartz

So you won't be surprised to hear that politics were involved. There was thoughts to build a bridge across the East River back in, like the 1860s or so.

00;15;13;23 - 00;15;33;08

Paul Schwartz

And at that time everything was done by water, right? So these ferries and people were shuttling goods, and folks between the boroughs or the cities at the time was they weren't we weren't quite incorporated. And there was a lot of resistance to taking that business away by putting up a bridge. So, politics ruled and it didn't happen.

00;15;33;10 - 00;15;58;00

Paul Schwartz

Then in the 1870s, I believe there was a major freeze of the East River and nothing can get across. So you couldn't get ferries across at all. And people were basically stranded on their boroughs, and commerce came to a grinding halt. And the politicians says, oh, we have to do something about this. We need that bridge. And that's spurned the real force behind the building of the Brooklyn Bridge, which was completed in 1883.

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Paul Schwartz

And as that link proved to be valuable, then we saw the other three major bridges come up. So the Williamsburg Bridge was in 1903, the Manhattan Bridge in 1909, as well as the Queensboro in 1909. Really connecting the city.

00;16;11;16 - 00;16;23;14

Emily Weidenhof

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Fantastic. Hey, listeners, we hope you're enjoying this episode of our podcast. For those of you who are as enthusiastic about transportation and planning as we are, we'd like to hear from you.

00;16;23;17 - 00;16;34;04

Emily Weidenhof

You can submit topics and questions that you'd like us to cover at nyc.gov/curbenthusiasm and now back to our conversation.

00;16;34;07 - 00;16;43;13

Emily Weidenhof

And I think another piece of technology that it would be great to learn about is your Weigh in motion efforts. Can you tell us about that?

00;16;43;20 - 00;16;46;27

Paul Schwartz

What we've been talking a lot about is maintaining the capacity, right.

00;16;46;27 - 00;17;09;25

Paul Schwartz

Bridges were designed, some of them very long ago, and they were designed to a certain capacity. And over time, loads changed, right? Trucks have gotten heavier, legally, they've gotten heavier. But we haven't rebuilt every bridge since that's happened. So now we're thinking about, well, I can strengthen a bridge only so much. I need to also control the loads that are going on there.

00;17;09;28 - 00;17;29;28

Paul Schwartz

So the way in motion technology has been around for quite some time. And what it does is it allows you to accurately weigh a vehicle, in this case trucks, by axle, and by G V W equals vehicle weight. So we know how much each axle weighs. We know the axle spacing. And then we know the legal weight of the vehicle.

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Paul Schwartz

What we've done here in New York City, which was the first of its kind in the nation, is to make this into an automated enforcement program of that. So, Tom Vipana, and my staff has led that effort amazingly successfully. A lot of hard work has gone into it, and we've stood up the first two locations and they're along the BQE of automated enforcement of Weigh in Motion technology.

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Paul Schwartz

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And what we saw on that was that we were getting overweight trucks that were significantly above what the allowable weights were supposed to be. And by implementing this, we brought them down the overweight by about 60%. So basically we brought them back down to what it would be legal. So what we would design for today. So while it's still more than what the bridge was designed for originally the BQE, we designed with all sorts of safety factors.

00;18;18;21 - 00;18;38;27

Paul Schwartz

Right? So we know we've had extra capacity. So we're not concerned about that. But we've now got weights down to what would be expected. And that's really important because that will help lengthen the service life of a structure over time. So we were excited to get legislation recently that will allow us to now do this at nine other city D O T locations.

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Paul Schwartz

We've got partners at T B T A who have a site, we have partners at the Bridge Authority who are going to have sites. And so we're going to start to roll this program out where we can really protect that critical infrastructure. And we're focused on things like the East River bridges and certain moveable bridges that are very expensive to maintain, are very expensive to do work on and you know, are very old.

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Paul Schwartz

So we want to make sure that they are able to, you know, live for the next 100 years. Right. And this is one of those tools that will have to do that to get there.

00;19;08;19 - 00;19;30;03

Paul Schwartz

Fantastic. And just like you mentioned, the weight of trucks is changing over time. We're also thinking about environmental conditions changing over time. And so what is the next 100 years look like to you as you're thinking about, you know, some of the environmental changes that we're seeing in New York City and what that means for our bridges.

00;19;30;07 - 00;19;51;05

Emily Weidenhof

So there's a couple of different things. There's there's the just change in the environment, change in, sea levels that we're expecting. Right. So we've got new standards that are going to help us make sure that we build resilient structures, that we keep things high enough up out of our water that we are designing to, the types of storms we're getting now.

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Paul Schwartz

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We're getting very intense storms. So sometimes short duration, but heavy rainfall, all that water has to go somewhere. Yeah, right. So we're designing better, bigger drainage. We're designing retention tanks because you're dumping into a system that is limited. So you have to kind of meter what gets dumped into the system. So from the environmental side on the structure end of it or the capacity side we're looking at that. On the load side,

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Paul Schwartz

Electric vehicles will have quite an impact. They're a lot heavier. Right. And as you go to electrification of trucks, there's concern that, you know, people were hauling are not going to want to take a hit on their cargo area to make up the weight for the battery. So we're expecting that there will be a push in the future to start to increase truck weights.

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Paul Schwartz

And we're already seeing that in like the southeast US, where the legal limit has gone up to about 90,000 pounds, which would not be good in the city right now. So keeping that in mind as we build our bridges going forward, to try to make sure that we're preparing for what could be coming in the next 100 years,

00;20;54;21 - 00;20;55;00

Emily Weidenhof

Right.

00;20;55;00 - 00;21;00;24

Paul Schwartz

There's a bunch of things that we're not ready for. Yeah, because we don't know about them yet.

00;21;00;27 - 00;21;16;00

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah. Yeah, indeed. And again, another great kind of perspective on the benefits of D O Ts blue highways pilot is, you know, carrying a lot of that load and weight on our water system versus our bridges system, you know, and how that can be a huge benefit.

00;21;16;02 - 00;21;33;08

Paul Schwartz

And so will the last mile delivery efforts at the agency's making and really trying to get those into smaller, you know, micromobility type of delivery systems, right. To be able to take the advantage of electrification, right, and be able to put it out there in a way that makes sense for our community.

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Emily Weidenhof

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Do you have a favorite little bridge that maybe doesn't get the spotlight that the Brooklyn Bridge or Queensboro or Verrazano Bridges get?

00;21;43;00 - 00;22;07;00

Paul Schwartz

I do, I do, so it's Carroll Street Bridge. So over the Gowanus and Brooklyn, one section of Brooklyn, it's a small little, retractable bridge. So it has a couple trusses that are sitting on like train tracks, basically. And these trucks, you know, wheels then just retract into the adjacent land. So it kind of opens up diagonal to the waterway.

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Paul Schwartz

And the bridge itself is, a beautiful blue with a nice wooden deck. We are actually in process of refurbishing that right now. So we're going to give it a brand new sidewalk decking and roadway decking. And the abutment is being rebuilt as we speak as well. And it is one of two retractable bridges in the whole city, which is pretty cool.

00;22;28;29 - 00;22;49;15

Paul Schwartz

And that one, as well as Port and Avenue and the other one that are both fully functional. And one of four movable bridge types. So we've got our basketballs, which are our drawbridges, the French word for seesaw bascule. We have our vertical lifts, and then our swing bridges. So the vertical lift would be like ninth Street bridge.

00;22;49;17 - 00;23;12;21

Paul Schwartz

Some people may be familiar with or Wards Island two major, you know, big towers that kind of raise up a lot of the landscape over the water. There's cables that just pull the span right up. And then we've got our, swing bridges, like along the Hudson River. So, like, what's Avenue third and all those, they sit on a center pier, and then they rotate and they allow navigation to pass on either side.

00;23;12;23 - 00;23;25;13

Emily Weidenhof

Great. And how are those managed? Are there people watching them or people calling in our ships, calling in their reservation to get the bridge moved? How does that, movement actually get organized?

00;23;25;13 - 00;23;27;25

Paul Schwartz

Yeah, it's a hot ticket, you know, you got to get on line and get it early.

00;23;27;25 - 00;23;29;17

Emily Weidenhof

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Yeah, yeah.

00;23;29;19 - 00;23;35;11

Paul Schwartz

So we have a dedicated group of bridge operators, and there are 24 seven operation.

00;23;35;18 - 00;23;54;10

Paul Schwartz

We have some bridges that are on demand. So like Hamilton Avenue Bridge is on demand. And we'll have folks who are just assigned to that bridge house, 24, seven different ships, of course. And, they operate on demand. When the Mariner says, I need to get in, we're ready. We have other bridges at a two hour notice, a four hour notice.

00;23;54;10 - 00;23;55;13

Paul Schwartz

And so that's the reservation you have to make, right?

00;23;55;17 - 00;23;56;22

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah, yeah.

00;23;56;25 - 00;24;15;23

Paul Schwartz

And we've got a lot of working waterways in the city. And I know there's been a lot of, you know, ferries recently, but there's still a ton of industry that comes up and down, whether it's oil and scrap metal or barging of materials for concrete plants and things like that. So we see a lot of activity along Newtown Creek, along the Gowanus with the cleanup right now.

00;24;15;24 - 00;24;16;16

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah.

00;24;16;16 - 00;24;18;20

Emily Weidenhof

And up along the Hutchinson River as well.

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Emily Weidenhof

Great. All right, Paul, something we ask all of our guests. What is your biggest pet peeve about public transportation? Or maybe in your case, what is your biggest pet peeve about how the public uses our bridges?

00;24;32;25 - 00;24;38;07

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Paul Schwartz

I love that the public uses the bridges, of course. Don't love that they leave things behind sometimes.

00;24;38;11 - 00;24;57;12

Paul Schwartz

Specifically Lovelocks. They're all over there. They were over the Brooklyn Bridge, over in Community bridges, a lot near schools. Those high school kids getting up to no good, and ribbons and tying things like that onto the bridge. Yeah. We spend actually a lot of time going out there and cutting these things down and removing them because it adds weight.

00;24;57;12 - 00;25;03;02

Paul Schwartz

It's not good. So please, come enjoy. But don't leave things behind.

00;25;03;04 - 00;25;08;20

Emily Weidenhof

And what are you most enthusiastic about for the future of transportation?

00;25;08;22 - 00;25;29;07

Paul Schwartz

Really enthusiastic about some of the technologies that we're working on. You know, there's the weigh in motion, there's drone technology that we're looking at, there's robotics starting to happen. There's pre-cast or prefabricated accelerated bridge construction in the industry so that we can do, like, more complicated things offsite and then assemble it.

00;25;29;14 - 00;25;43;27

Paul Schwartz

And so there's a lot of excitement in that field. But the other thing that I think we all need to stay excited about is really educating and getting people into this work.

00;25;44;00 - 00;26;05;13

Paul Schwartz

It's a very passionate field to be in, but we're not seeing the level of engineers or skilled trades that we've seen in the past get involved, and we're doing our best to be, you know, good custodians for these structures. And, we want to pass them off to people who care just as much as we do. So we do need to make sure that the next generation is learning about this.

00;26;05;13 - 00;26;11;08

Paul Schwartz

And on the engineering side, as well as the the trade side, to make sure that these things last for the next hundred years.

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00;26;11;11 - 00;26;33;02

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah, absolutely. Well, thank you so much for your time, for sharing all of your knowledge and passion about New York City bridges. And yeah, we are so excited to have an amazing team that is both thinking strategically about long term planning and integrating future technologies.

00;26;33;02 - 00;26;41;07

Emily Weidenhof

But also teams that are willing to be up at all hours and respond at a moment's notice. Really grateful for all your work. Thank you.

00;26;41;12 - 00;26;44;19

Paul Schwartz

Thanks for having me. It's my pleasure.

00;26;44;21 - 00;27;00;16

Ydanis Rodriguez

Hi. My name is Ydanis Rodriguez, Commissioner, New York City Department of Transportation, thank you for listening to Curb Enthusiasm by New York City DOT. This episode was produced by Michael Santos with video support from Sigurjon Gudjonsson.

00;27;00;18 - 00;27;16;14

Ydanis Rodriguez

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