



APRIL 2020 ■ E-NEWSLETTER

A monthly e-newsletter providing information about Mobility35, a regionwide effort to improve safety and mobility along I-35 in Williamson, Travis and Hays counties.

LESS TRAFFIC MEANS MORE CONSTRUCTION ON I-35

These are unprecedented times and like you, TxDOT is taking precautions to prevent the spread of Covid-19. At the same time, construction continues along I-35 as transportation is an essential service.

While we're experiencing lower traffic volume, TxDOT can extend lane closure hours, giving crews more time to complete project tasks. In some cases, including the I-35 from Rundberg Lane to US 290 East project, lane closures may start as early as 7:30 p.m. for nighttime work. Additional extended closures may be added to move projects along sooner. The Mobility35 team is monitoring traffic flow and should volumes increase substantially, we will re-evaluate extended closures. Follow our Twitter account @TxDOTAustin for the latest lane closures.



Crews setting beams on the southbound I-35 to southbound US 183 flyover at the I-35 from Rundberg Lane to US 290 E project

Rest assured, safety continues to be a top priority at TxDOT. Each day before they start their shifts, our construction and maintenance employees and contractors are briefed on proper Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) safety protocols, including social distancing.

We continue our community safety messaging aimed at those who must be on the roadways. You may have seen the dynamic message signs in both English and Spanish.



For those who do need to travel, be advised that TxDOT has closed the lobbies of its 12 Travel Information Centers until further notice. Outside restrooms will remain available at all times. The [safety rest areas](#) on highways throughout the state remain open. Anyone can call 1-800-452-9292 or visit drivetexas.org to obtain road condition information 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Our mission is to continue building and maintaining our roadway infrastructure while doing our part to prevent the spread of Covid-19. #StayHomeTexas if you can and stay safe.

POSEY ROAD PROJECT UPDATE

In May 2019, TxDOT demolished the old Posey Road bridge and began construction of a new I-35 overpass. The future I-35 overpass at Posey Road will accommodate increased traffic demand and will be taller to accommodate all sizes of vehicles.

Since the beginning of 2020, crews have been working towards reaching a spring milestone to open the new northbound side of the overpass. Before the northbound lanes can open to traffic, crews must finish paving, place both permanent and temporary rail and stripe the roadway.

The project team is also moving forward with work along the northbound frontage road in order to complete the new Posey Road exit ramp. After converting the northbound frontage road to one-way traffic in 2019, work began on reversing the entrance and exit ramps between York Creek Road and Posey Road. The Posey Road exit is anticipated to open this summer, weather permitting, with the new entrance ramp just south of Posey Road expected to open shortly thereafter. Once this work is complete, the project team will focus on constructing the eastern portion of the new Posey Road intersection under I-35.

Improvements along the southbound I-35 frontage road continue. These include drainage and utilities and preparation for the widening of the frontage road between Posey Road and York Creek Road.

To learn more about current efforts or to sign-up for traffic alerts for the project, visit the [I-35 at Posey Road](#) webpage.



Click the photo to see a video of the I-35 at Posey Road project

MEET THE I-35 AT POSEY ROAD PROJECT INSPECTOR

When construction on any TxDOT project is underway, inspectors are on hand to make sure the project meets quality and design specifications. TxDOT Senior Bridge Inspector Scott Dziekan oversees the [I-35 at Posey Road](#) project, which will look drastically different once complete because the mainlanes will travel over Posey Road, rather than under. Scott explains why this configuration was chosen and shares some other thoughts about his 23 years working for TxDOT's Bridge Division.



Senior Inspector Scott Dziekan at the I-35 at Posey Road project

- **What is unique about the design and/or construction of the future Posey Road overpass?**

- When we started I-35 went under Posey Road, but after the project is complete, the I-35 mainlanes will go over Posey Road. The overpass poses a challenge because it will need to be constructed while keeping I-35 open to traffic. To accommodate this, the bridge is being built in three phases: Phase 1 constructs the northbound side, phase 2 constructs the center section of the bridge and phase 3 constructs the southbound side. We are currently in phase 2 construction.
- **Why are the I-35 mainlanes being built over Posey Road?**
 - By building the I-35 mainlanes over Posey Road, larger vehicles will not need to pass under a bridge, eliminating any future concerns regarding vertical clearance.
- **How many bridges have you inspected along the I-35 corridor? Is there one in particular that stands out from your experience?**
 - I have inspected a range of bridges along the I-35 corridor, including new construction, bridge maintenance and impact repair work. One bridge that stands out for me is the I-35 frontage road bridges across the Brazos River in Waco. They're not only beautiful to look at, but they are also unique in their hybrid design of steel, reinforced concrete and cable-supported superstructure.
- **What do you love about working at TxDOT?**
 - What I love most about working at TxDOT is the diversity of work opportunities and the team of people I have worked with throughout the years.
- **This must be a huge responsibility. Describe the importance of what you do.**
 - As a project inspector, I want to ensure my fellow Texans get the safest and best transportation system we can build.
- **What are three things that we might find you doing during the weekend when you are not working?**
 - As my wife calls it, "piddlin" around in the shop, fishing, and spending time outdoors.

TXDOT AIMS TO PREVENT PEDESTRIAN FATALITIES BY INSTALLING BARRIERS ALONG I-35

Last month, TxDOT began installing a new pedestrian barrier along I-35 between 51st Street and Rundberg Lane. The pilot project is part of TxDOT's [Road to Zero](#) initiative and is an expansion

of the *Be Safe Be Seen* pedestrian safety program. The barrier is designed to deter pedestrians from trying to cross the interstate and instead encourage the use of intersections that include crosswalks for pedestrian access.

“Pedestrian deaths are up not only nationwide, but also here in Austin,” remarked Tucker Ferguson, TxDOT Austin district engineer. “Last year we painted no pedestrian crossing signs on the center-line barriers near 51st Street and have seen good success. Today, we are expanding on that initiative, by adding a 2-foot panel on top of the center-line barrier and painting the no pedestrian crossing signs along a 3.3-mile stretch of I-35 where we continue to see an increase in pedestrian fatalities.”

The new pedestrian barrier is designed to be easily removed by emergency personnel for access in the event of a crash. It will also help reduce headlight glare from oncoming traffic. The \$700,000 pilot project is being paid for by the *Road to Zero* initiative approved by the Texas Transportation Commission in 2019. The initiative includes \$600 million over a two-year period for safety projects to help reach a goal of zero deaths on Texas highways by 2050.

“Pedestrians make up a significant portion of the total number of people killed on our roads each year,” said Transportation Commissioner Laura Ryan. “These new barriers will deter pedestrians from trying to cross such a busy section of highway, and ultimately help us end the horrific streak of daily deaths on Texas roads.”

TxDOT has partnered with state lawmakers, the City of Austin, the Austin Police Department, the Texas Department of Public Safety, business groups, schools and homeless advocates to spread the *Be Safe Be Seen* message throughout Austin.

“This novel approach will help reduce pedestrian fatalities - already too many of our traffic related deaths,” Austin Mayor Steve Adler said. “This is Austin and the State working together to save lives.”

Since the *Be Safe Be Seen* initiative was launched in 2017, more than 12,000 reflective bags have been distributed to pedestrians, including children and people experiencing homelessness. TxDOT has also partnered with more than 100 businesses along I-35 to display “Stay Alive, Don’t Cross I-35” window clings and table tents in English and Spanish.

TxDOT is also working to improve safety through its [Talk. Text. Crash.](#) campaign. This campaign aims to raise awareness and educate drivers about the dangers associated with distracted driving and encourage them to put away their cellphones while behind the wheel.

In 2018, there were 540,561 motor vehicle crashes on Texas roadways. Of those, 95,572, or 18%, were caused by distracted driving (driver distraction, inattention or cell phone use). The 95,572 distracted driving crashes resulted in 394 deaths and 2,340 serious injuries. Data for 2019 will be available later this year.

In 2017, the Texas Legislature passed a [statewide ban](#) on using a wireless communications

device for electronic messaging while operating a motor vehicle. Texting, as well as reading or writing email, is prohibited while driving in Texas.

For more information on TxDOT's programs and efforts to make Texas roads safer, visit www.txdot.gov.



TxDOT Austin District Engineer Tucker Ferguson unveils the new pedestrian barriers at the March 10 news conference

MY35 CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

I-35 at Corn Hill (Bud Stockton Loop): Crews have opened the new northbound I-35 entrance ramp, just south of Bud Stockton Loop (CR 313), and the southbound I-35 exit (#273) for Ronald Reagan Boulevard. Efforts have now shifted to working on the southernmost exit ramp between CR 143 and FM 972. This project is expected to be completed in mid-2021.

I-35 at Ronald Reagan Boulevard: The eastbound bridge columns over southbound I-35 have been completed. Crews are continuing to move forward with adding concrete and coping, or a cap, to the retaining walls on the eastbound bridge. Once complete, they will turn their attention to the development of the center bridge columns. This project is expected to complete in mid-2021.

I-35 from RM 1431 to FM 3406 (northbound): Work continues on the widening and reconfiguration of the left-hand side of the frontage road from two to three lanes. Crews have completed the deck pour on the left-hand side at Chandler Creek bridge and are currently working on the new RM 1431 exit ramp. This project is expected to complete in early 2021.

I-35 at Parmer Lane: In March, crews removed and replaced two beams at each corner of the Parmer Lane bridge to aid in the widening of the entrances and approaches for the future diverging diamond intersection. Additionally, the project team relocated light poles along the southbound I-35 frontage road and began preparations for the reconstruction of the left-turn lane along eastbound Parmer Lane. This project is expected to complete in mid-2021.

I-35 from Rundberg Lane to US 290 East: Crews completed construction of the column caps and poured the deck of the southbound I-35 to southbound US 183 flyover in late March. They set several beams on the new flyover during the first week of April. Work continues on the construction of a shared-use path along the northbound I-35 frontage road, near Rundberg Lane. Utility installation continues along the northbound frontage road between St. Johns Avenue and I-35. This project is expected to complete in mid-2021.

I-35 at Oltorf Street: The final two overhead sign bridges were installed just south of Oltorf Street, while crews placed additional street level signage throughout the project area. In late March, the construction team replaced sections of the center-median barrier between the northbound and southbound I-35 mainlanes. The project team is planning to level the I-35 mainlanes and prepare for final paving in the coming month. This project is expected to complete in mid-2020.

I-35 from Stassney Lane to William Cannon Drive: Crews are working to reconstruct the southbound I-35 William Cannon Drive exit ramp north of the current exit ramp location. In order

to complete the work, the current exit ramp (#228) will be closed until mid-April. This project is expected to complete in mid-2020.



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