



MAY 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.

TEXAS TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION APPROVES \$3.4 BILLION PLAN FOR I-35 IMPROVEMENTS THROUGH AUSTIN

A major reconstruction of I-35 through downtown Austin is a step closer to reality after the Texas Transportation Commission approved an update to the 2020 Unified Transportation Program (UTP) to allocate \$3.4 billion for the I-35 Capital Express Central project.

The \$3.4 billion is from the Commission's discretionary funds not previously allocated in the UTP, a 10-year planning document that guides the development

of the state's future transportation projects. In April, the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) passed a resolution committing \$633 million to the Central project. In addition, around \$300 million will be considered by the Commission when it votes on the 2021 UTP in August 2020. The funding identified by Chairman J. Bruce Bugg, Jr. is the result of years of planning and discussions with Governor Greg Abbott, regional transportation planners and stakeholders.

The [I-35 Capital Express Central](#) project proposes to add two continuous non-tolled managed lanes in each direction along the 7.9-mile section on I-35 from US 290 East to US 290 West/SH71. Additional auxiliary and frontage road lanes roads would also be built.



I-35 Capital Express Central project location

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED MEANS

MORE TIME FOR CONSTRUCTION

With lower traffic volumes, TxDOT has accelerated some roadway projects. There have been fewer vehicles on our highways since the statewide shelter-in-place mandate was issued in response to COVID-19. Traffic volumes on I-35 through Austin in late March fell 49% compared to the same period last year. Austin experienced the largest decrease among the state's metropolitan areas. Fort Worth saw a 43% drop, while traffic on I-35 in Dallas fell 37%

Typically, construction and lane closures take place between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. With lower traffic volumes, TxDOT has extended the work hours to keep projects moving forward. For instance, crews on the I-35 at Parmer Lane project reconstructed four driveways along the southbound I-35 frontage road in two weeks instead of four. Lane closures were also extended on the [I-35 from Rundberg Lane to US 290 East](#) and [I-35 at Oltorf Street](#) projects

As project teams continue to look for ways to construct projects faster, we want to remind drivers traveling along I-35 to obey the speed limit and avoid distractions. Last year, crashes in work zones rose 3%, so always slow down & pay attention to keep our workers safe. #WorkZoneSafety



Traffic volumes at I-35 and US 183 on March 23, 2020

FLYOVERS AND THEIR FUTURE CONNECTIVITY

They say a picture is worth a thousand words and we have two photos that speak volumes about the I-35 from Rundberg Lane to US 290 East project, also known as the 183 Flyover project. Three new flyovers are being built and the project team has made tremendous progress. The flyovers will enhance the east-west connectivity at the I-35 and US 183 intersection by allowing traffic to travel from one highway to the other without the need to go through intersections or travel along the frontage roads.

Take a look and you'll see a huge difference at the intersection of I-35 and US 183.



I-35 and US 183 interchange in April 2018



I-35 and US 183 interchange in May 2020

In April, crews set 72 support beams and poured five deck spans for three flyovers: southbound I-35 to southbound US 183, northbound US 183 to northbound I-35, and southbound I-35 to northbound US 183. With the length of the concrete support beams ranging from 67-120 feet, crews set more than 4,824 feet of beams, or the equivalent of stacking the state capitol on itself 15 1/2 times!

In May, the project team plans to continue constructing the flyovers and the new St. Johns Avenue bridge. Other major work on this [Texas Clear Lanes](#) project includes finishing construction of a pedestrian safety barrier between 51st Street and Rundberg Lane and installing utilities along the northbound and southbound I-35 frontage roads. This \$124 million project is expected to complete in mid-2021.

To learn more about current efforts or to sign-up for traffic alerts for the project, visit the [I-35 from Rundberg Lane to US 290 East](#) webpage.



Click the photo to see a video of the I-35 from Rundberg Lane to US 290 East project

AN INSIDERS PERSPECTIVE: THE I-35 FROM RUNDBERG LANE TO US 290 EAST PROJECT

Behind every TxDOT construction project stands a project manager who is responsible for coordinating construction activity, ensuring contractors adhere to strict engineering guidelines and making certain that the project stays on schedule and on budget. TxDOT Transportation Engineer Matthew Kelly is the project manager on the [I-35 from Rundberg Lane to US 290 East](#) project. Matthew provided us with an insider's perspective on what it's like to lead this project.



Project Manager Matthew Kelly at the I-35 from Rundberg Lane to US 290 East project

- **What is unique about the design and construction of the project?**
 - One of the unique design components is how we are integrating the southbound I-35 to northbound US 183 flyover into existing US 183, which is elevated. This requires tying in one type of bridge infrastructure into a completely different and unique bridge design.

- **Why are we building so many flyovers and rebuilding the approach to northbound I-35 to northbound US 183 flyover?**
 - Building the flyovers will help improve traffic on the frontage roads while allowing drivers to transition from one freeway to the other without having to go through a traffic signal. The project improves mobility and connectivity between I-35 and US 183 allowing traffic to easily travel east and west from north and southbound I-35, and vice versa.
 - The existing northbound I-35 to northbound US 183 flyover is at a steep grade, which makes it difficult for large trucks to ascend. This slows down traffic along northbound I-35. By reconstructing and improving this flyover, we will flatten the grade to help cars and trucks to climb the flyover more easily. Additionally,

the project includes reconstructing the northbound I-35 entrance ramp to pass under the reconstructed flyover, eliminating weaving on the mainlanes, which improves safety.

- **What is challenging about the project that someone driving by wouldn't know**
 - This is a big project in terms of cost and significance to our highway system. Many people would not understand the degree and level of effort and coordination that goes into building this type of project. There are a multitude of parties, contractors and project team members that are required on a daily basis to keep this project moving along. It is part of my job to ensure that all activities are coordinated to minimize the impact on the traveling public.

- **What makes some of the flyover beams unique?**
 - The flyovers are designed to go up and over the mainlanes of traffic, so some of the spans (distance between two bridge supports) are fairly long. To cover these distances, we are using steel beams that are up to 222 feet in length.

- **What is your favorite part about working on large-scale transportation and mobility projects?**
 - I enjoy the challenge that it provides and knowing that when we finish, it'll make a big impact for Austin and the greater central Texas region. Being born and raised in Austin and having watched the city grow, I enjoy the opportunity to help make a positive impact on the city that I know and love.

- **When you're not busy overseeing the project what do you like to do in your spare time?**
 - I like to stay active by working out and playing sports. I also enjoy spending time with friends touring Texas Hill Country wineries, breweries and distilleries.

- **If you could see any musical artist in concert (past or present), who would it be?**
 - I like a wide range of music, but right now I'd have to go with J Cole.

WORK ZONE SAFETY: EVERYBODY'S RESPONSIBILITY

TxDOT wants to remind drivers to adhere to all traffic laws and speed limits and prioritize safe driving practices in work zones along our major highways.

In 2019, more than 26,000 crashes occurred in work zones in Texas, resulting in 167 fatalities and 690 serious injuries. Our construction work zones are the sites of ongoing activities and require motorists to take added precautions and safety measures when driving through them. Drivers are likely to encounter many environments, including uneven pavement, narrow lanes, concrete barriers, slow-moving heavy equipment and vehicles that make sudden stops. Please keep the following tips in mind when driving through work zones:

- Slow down and always follow posted work zone speed limits. Remember, traffic fines double in work zones when workers are present and can cost up to \$2,000.
- Pay attention as workers and heavy equipment may only be a few feet from passing vehicles.
- Don't tailgate. Give yourself room to stop in a hurry. Rear-end collisions are the most common kind of work zone crashes.
- Stay alert, minimize distractions and put the phone away.
- Obey road crew flaggers.
- Allow extra time. Road construction slows things down. Count on it and plan for it.

TXDOT also reminds drivers to [Click it or Ticket](#). May 2020 marks the 18th anniversary of the *Click it or Ticket* program. Since its inception in 2002, seat belt usage has increased from 76% to more than 91%. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *Click It or Ticket* is estimated to have saved 5,856 lives, prevented more than 100,000 serious injuries and saved more than \$21.7 billion in related economic costs from 2002 through 2018.

In Texas, the law requires everyone in a vehicle to buckle up or face fines and court costs up to \$200. Children younger than 8 years must be in a child safety seat or booster seat unless they're taller than 4 feet 9 inches. If they aren't properly restrained, the driver faces fines up to \$250, plus court costs.

It is also important to look out for pedestrians and bicyclists. Remember to look both ways at cross streets, stop at red lights and stop signs, and pay attention to lane markers. Bicyclists are reminded to travel in the same direction as traffic.

At the end of the day, TxDOT wants all Texans – drivers, passengers, pedestrians, bicyclists and workers – to get home safely. For more information

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

MY35 CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

I-35 at Corn Hill (Bud Stockton Loop): Crews are currently working on two ramps north of Ronald Reagan Boulevard and two ramps north of CR 143. This project is expected to be complete in mid-2021.

I-35 at Ronald Reagan Boulevard: Crews are excavating, widening and adding the top layer to the retaining walls of the eastbound bridge. Once complete, they will focus on the center bridge columns. This project is expected to complete in mid-2021.

I-35 from RM 1431 to FM 3406 (northbound): The new RM 1431 exit ramp (#256) is now open, and traffic has shifted onto the newly paved portion of the northbound I-35 frontage road. Crews are working on the right side of the frontage road which is expanding from two to three lanes. This project is expected to complete in early 2021.

I-35 at Parmer Lane: In April, crews completed the first step in widening the westbound side of the Parmer Lane Bridge. Now crews are gearing up for the demolition of the eastbound side of the bridge to prepare for the future diverging diamond intersection. Additionally, the project team has reconstructed driveways along the southbound frontage road in relation to utility work that they are doing throughout the project area. This project is expected to be complete in mid-2021.

I-35 at Oltorf Street: The project team has completed all work to level the I-35 mainlanes throughout the project area. Crews are now planning for final paving and striping before the project is complete. This project is expected to complete in mid-2020.

I-35 from Stassney Lane to William Cannon Drive: Crews have relocated the

southbound I-35 William Cannon Drive exit ramp to a more northern location between Stassney Lane and William Cannon Drive. Additionally, work continues on the shared-use paths and reconstruction of driveways along the northbound and southbound I-35 frontage road between William Cannon Drive and Stassney Lane. This project is expected to complete in mid-2020.

I-35 at Posey Road: Northbound I-35 traffic was successfully shifted to the new overpass at Posey Road at the end of April. Crews continue to focus on the northbound I-35 ramps and the east portion of the I-35 and Posey Road intersection. Crews are also installing drainage inlets and utility pipes along the southbound I-35 frontage road in preparation for future ramp reversals. The project is expected to be complete in late 2021.



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