



JUNE 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.

TREMENDOUS GROWTH IN HAYS COUNTY BRINGS CHANGES TO I-35

Kyle is the second largest city in Hays County and it is experiencing exponential growth, with the population nearly doubling since 2010. The Mobility35 program will address the increase in traffic with the [I-35 from Kyle Crossing to RM 150](#) project.

The northbound I-35 ramps between RM 150 and Kyle Crossing were not designed to handle current traffic volumes. The I-35 from Kyle Crossing to RM 150 project will reverse the northbound I-35 ramps between Kyle Crossing and RM 150 to improve safety along the roadway. The project will also reconstruct

the existing northbound frontage road between FM 1626 and RM 150 to add an auxiliary lane between Kyle Crossing and FM 1626 and build a new bridge over Plum Creek between the two reversed ramps. The project is expected to break ground in mid-2020.



I-35 at Kyle Crossing

Construction cost for the I-35 from Kyle Crossing to RM 150 project is \$30 million. The project is funded by the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and TxDOT. The project is anticipated to be complete in early 2022. The contractor is Hunter Industries, Ltd.

AN INSIDERS PERSPECTIVE: MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS IN JARRELL

There's a lot of construction happening in Williamson County, including two projects in Jarrell. Jeremy Mikes is the TxDOT project manager for the [I-35 at Corn Hill \(Bud Stockton Loop and I-35 at Ronald Reagan Boulevard\)](#) projects, overseeing the reversal of multiple ramps and the construction of two bridges at Ronald Reagan Boulevard. Jeremy provided us with an insider's perspective on what it's like to lead these projects.



Project Manager Jeremy Mikes at the I-35 at Ronald Reagan Boulevard project

- **What is unique about the design and construction of the I-35 from Corn Hill (Bud Stockton Loop) to FM 972 and I-35 at Ronald Reagan Boulevard projects?**

- TxDOT is doing a lot of work to improve the safety and mobility along I-35 as part of both projects. The Corn Hill ramp project is unique because of the amount of planned ramp reversals and work along the frontage roads. The reason that TxDOT is reversing so many ramps is to provide the roadway with what we call “additional storage.” This means that the ramps in their new location will help prevent backups and traffic cueing along the mainlanes. In addition to reversing ramps, we are converting frontage roads in both directions to one way. Each of these project elements are essential to managing the growth anticipated in Williamson County throughout the coming years.
 - The I-35 at Ronald Reagan Boulevard project is special because of how TxDOT is redesigning the bridge over I-35. The new wider bridge will make it safer and easier for large trucks, which is vital for businesses throughout the area.
- **Why are we building two separate bridges instead of one large bridge at Ronald Reagan Boulevard?**
 - TxDOT partnered with Williamson County to build bridges that not only benefit drivers today but prepare for future frontage road improvements at Ronald Reagan Boulevard.
- **What are the benefits of reversing ramps?**
 - Ramp reversal projects benefit traffic by reducing backups on both the frontage roads and on the mainlanes.
- **What are the difficulties and challenges associated with building these two projects at the same time?**
 - One of the major challenges we face constructing adjacent projects, like the I-35 at Corn Hill and Ronald Reagan projects, is making sure that the plan sets match up where the two projects come together. It is extremely important that the project team prioritizes work between the projects and adjusts the inspection team, so that construction is as efficient and productive as possible. Most importantly, making sure there is a clear line of communication between TxDOT and our contractors so we limit impacts to adjacent businesses and drivers.
- **How long have you been a project manager at TxDOT? What is your favorite part of the job?**
 - I have been with TxDOT almost 14 years and a project manager for nearly eight. My favorite part of working for TxDOT is “the unknown.” Throughout my time here, I can honestly say that my job changes by the second. This challenge makes every day different and no task the same.
- **How do you spend your time when you’re not working?**
 - I have a big extended family and tend to spend a lot time with them. We are always playing sports, competing in BBQ cooking events and livestock shows across the state, and enjoying a relaxing day at the pool when we can.

- **If you could time travel, where would you go and why?**
 - If I could time travel, I would go back to the 1920's-1930's to see how my grandparents grew up during the Great Depression.

SOMETIMES IT TAKES A HERO TO KEEP OUR ESSENTIAL WORKERS MOVING

Have you ever been driving down the highway and heard a loud pop? Often it is the sound of a tire blowing and it can be scary and frustrating at the same time. Back in April, Heather Watson was driving on I-35 when her typical morning was interrupted by that noise. Heather needed a HERO and lucky for her, Joey Campbell was on patrol. The Highway Emergency Response Operator spotted Heather's car on the shoulder and stopped to help. Joey jumped into action, changing the tire while following pandemic safety protocols. Heather was not only relieved, but expressed her gratitude by reaching out to TxDOT and thanking Joey Campbell.

"I had a blow out this morning on I-35, and he happened to be at the right place right time and helped me change out my tire and was amazing and super nice," Heather said. "I wanted to send my praise for a great job, and to say thank you for the help and rescue."

Joey, one of many essential workers, continues to carry out his mission by helping stranded motorists along our major highways in the Austin area. During the current COVID-19 pandemic, our HEROs are assisting emergency responders and keeping our essential workers moving.



Click on picture to watch Joey Campbell in action along I-35 in January 2020

Over the past two months, HERO crews have traveled 382,000 miles along our Central Texas highways. They have assisted on more than 7,200 incidents, provided emergency roadside services to 9,500 motorists and have responded to 750 crashes.

To keep both motorists and HERO crew members safe, TxDOT instituted protocols and procedures for the pandemic. Crew members are required to practice social distancing, wipe down and sanitize equipment, keys, and radios daily, and are required to wear masks when working with others.

The Highway Emergency Response Operator program is a partnership between TxDOT and the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization.

The HERO trucks operate from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday, patrolling I-35, US 183, US 290, SH 71 and MoPac. Weekend service is available on I-35 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. If you need assistance, call (512) 974-HERO.

If you've been assisted by the HERO service, we welcome your feedback through this [four-minute survey](#). Thank you for your time.

FUTURE MOBILITY35 PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: GRAND AVENUE PARKWAY

High traffic volumes and heavy backups are not unusual along I-35, especially between SH 45 North and Grand Avenue Parkway. A new project scheduled to get underway later this year will address the congestion in this area. The [I-35 from SH 45 North to Grand Avenue Parkway](#) project will reverse entrance and exit ramps within the project limits and construct extended entrance and exit lanes along the mainlanes and frontage roads. These improvements will reduce weaving on the mainlanes, increasing safety and improving the flow of traffic.

Construction of the \$8 million project is funded by TxDOT and the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and is anticipated to start in mid-2020 and complete in mid-2021, weather permitting. The contractor for the project is Jordan Foster Construction.



Grand Avenue Parkway on May 28, 2020

MY35 CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

I-35 at Corn Hill (Bud Stockton Loop): The new southbound I-35 entrance ramp south of Ronald Reagan Boulevard is now open. Crews are currently working on the new northbound I-35 exit for [Ronald Reagan Boulevard \(#269\)](#). Once the new ramp opens (scheduled for later this month), the old ramp will permanently close. This project is expected to be complete in mid-2021.

I-35 at Ronald Reagan Boulevard: Crews are currently working on forming the center columns for the eastbound bridge. This project is expected to complete in mid-2021.

I-35 from RM 1431 to FM 3406 (northbound): After opening the new RM 1431 exit (#256) in early May, crews are working on widening the frontage road from two to three lanes. This project is expected to complete in early 2021.

[I-35 at Parmer Lane](#): In May, crews completed work along the westbound side of the Parmer Lane bridge and switched to the eastbound side to perform similar improvements. This work involves widening the bridge approaches for the future [diverging diamond intersection](#) and replacing bridge guard rail. Additionally, crews are continuing to build the retaining walls along both northbound and southbound I-35. The project is on target to be completed by mid-2021.

[I-35 from Rundberg Lane to US 290 East](#): Throughout May, crews set 14 beams on the southbound I-35 to northbound US 183 flyover. Driveway reconstruction along the northbound I-35 frontage between US 290 East and US 183 also began. This work will continue throughout the coming weeks as the project team looks to tie in these driveways with other improvements made along the frontage road. Additionally, pedestrian safety barrier continues to be installed along the I-35 median between 51st Street and Rundberg Lane. This project is expected to complete in mid-2021.

[I-35 at Oltorf Street](#): Final paving operations for this project began in May and will continue through June. Drivers can expect nightly lane closures until paving and striping is completed. This is the last major construction component of the project before its completion. This project is expected to complete in mid-2020.

[I-35 from Stassney Lane to William Cannon Drive](#): Work on the southbound I-35 William Cannon Drive exit ramp was completed, and the southbound I-35 entrance ramp, just south of Corral Lane, was reopened. Construction of the right-turn lane from the northbound frontage road to eastbound Stassney Lane, as well as some frontage road paving, was completed. Work continues on the storm sewer system, shared-use path, high-mast lighting and driveway reconstruction along both the northbound and southbound I-35 frontage roads. This project is expected to complete in mid-2020.

[I-35 at Posey Road](#): Crews permanently closed the southbound I-35 entrance ramp south of Centerpoint Road in late May. This ramp will be moved further south and a new exit for Posey Road will be built in its place during a later phase

in the project. Utility and drainage work along the southbound I-35 frontage road. In June, crews plan to set beams on the southbound I-35 overpass at Posey Road as well as continue construction of west Posey Road. The project is expected to be complete in late 2021.



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