

# Star-Telegram

## Haltom Road bridge over Northeast Loop 820 will be only partially closed during North Tarrant Express construction

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HALTOM CITY -- After objections from city officials, the Haltom Road bridge over Northeast Loop 820 won't be closed during North Tarrant Express construction.

That's good news for Sam Jones, who uses the bridge at least twice a day on trips between his home and Glenview Baptist Church, where he leads the music.

"This would be a huge adjustment for our parishioners" if the bridge closed, Jones said.

Some of the biggest headaches related to the construction of the North Tarrant Express will involve the bridges that span the 13.5-mile stretch of the busy freeway.

From Interstate 35W west to Industrial Boulevard, there are 16 vehicle-traffic bridges over 820 and Texas 121/183. All but one must be rebuilt before the \$2.5 billion project is finished in 2015.

Most will remain open during their reconstruction. Four will be closed for as long as a year, said an official with NTE Mobility Partners, which is overseeing the project.

Haltom City officials were adamant that the Haltom Road bridge remain open.

"NTEMP understood our concerns, and they've been good to work with," said City Manager Tom Muir.

A major concern was inconvenience to students attending Haltom High School, which is just north of the bridge, Muir said. But there was also a safety issue.

Fire Chief Joel Thompson said that Fire Station 3 is in the base of the water tower that looms over the bridge. For three apartment complexes on Springlake Parkway, between Haltom Road and Denton Highway, the normal response time from Station 3 is two minutes. Losing the bridge would triple that.

Firefighters "would have to go to Beach and then back east," Thompson said. "It would be quicker to respond from the central fire station on Broadway Street, which would be about a five-minute response."

Only half the bridge will be closed at a time, spokesman Robert Hinkle said.

"That will at least keep traffic flowing through there," he said.

The same can't be said for the Hurstview Drive bridge, which is unfortunate for Adam Dare and other Hurst residents who use it. It's one of the four that will close.

"I deliver pizzas four nights a week," Dare said. "I use that bridge all the time."

Lara Kohl, a spokeswoman for Bluebonnet Contractors, which is in charge of construction, had good and bad news for Dare. The bridge will still be closed for nine months or more, but it isn't closing as soon as folks were told.

"We're probably looking at next year around June," she said.

Kohl said the change illustrates the dynamic nature of the project's schedule.

"Two days ago we were planning on closing Hurstview bridge this summer," she said Wednesday. "It's really critical for drivers to stay informed about what's happening in this corridor."

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