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# Excitement As North Tarrant Express Project Nears Completion

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**Bud Gillett**

Bud is the most veteran reporter at CBS 11 News with 42 years in m...

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**FORT WORTH (CBS 11 NEWS)** – A long-awaited highway project is inching towards a close, and local residents couldn't be happier. The North Tarrant Expressway is set to reopen in October — two months earlier than projected.

Area [business](#) owners and customers — especially restaurants and their valued patrons — are just ready for the dust to finally settle.

Bedford resident Regina Eaton said, "It's not as easy... and for a lot of times when they first, actually began this whole turmoil we actually just stayed home." Eaton is the kind of [customer](#) local restaurants hope to lure back.

The 13.4 miles of the northeast Tarrant County highway stretches through six cities and has been a work in progress nearly half-a-decade.

As the grand reopening approaches, officials with North Tarrant Express (NTE) sent out a tweet Wednesday, urging motorists to patronize restaurants that have sweated through construction.

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"It'll be great when it's over," she said. "But I hear it's going to be early, right? That's what they tell us, so we're excited."

The news is welcomed too by restaurants along the corridor and for [managers](#) like Robert Hernandez of the Golden China Restaurant.

"Hopefully our [customers](#) will come back and it'll be easier to get from one place to another place without having to hassle with the construction and all that stuff," he said.

Hernandez said he had a noontime rush on Thursday, but by 1:30 p.m. Golden China was empty.

Over the years Hernandez says he has heard a lot of customer frustrations. "Some come in here and say, 'Yeah, I was waiting on that light for 30 minutes and I haven't been able to get into here.' And most customers only have 30 minutes to eat."

Golden China survived the one-two punch of the great recession, followed by construction that occasionally shut it off from its motoring lifeblood. But some places didn't survive... the highway is pockmarked with shells of eateries.

Eaton said other restaurants [simply](#) relocated. "This one, for example, Mexican Inn...actually shut down and then came back up. Remodeled the existing site."

But the projected North Tarrant Expressway re-opening has sparked optimism. "For lease" signs are popping up along the roadway. Change is coming — good change. Robert Hernandez is hoping the year will end [better](#) than it started. "Hopefully we can have a better Christmas this year," he smiled.

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