

## Your Commute JUNE 28, 2015

# Five things to know about the Loop 820/I-35W mess



All eastbound Loop 820 lanes will be closed late Monday until early morning Tuesday at I-35W interchange. Shown, traffic piling up earlier this year at Loop 820 and Western Center Boulevard. | **Rodger Mallison** - Star-Telegram

BY GORDON DICKSON

[gdickson@star-telegram.com](mailto:gdickson@star-telegram.com)

HALTOM CITY — More closures are coming this week on Interstate 35W and Loop 820 in north Tarrant County.

We know that motorists are frustrated by the delays and detours. So in an effort to help out, here are five things to know about the North Tarrant Express project.

## Lane closures this week

First, what you need to know right now:

Loop 820 will be a challenging road to travel after hours for the next couple of days. All eastbound lanes of Loop 820 will be closed from 9 p.m. Monday to 5 a.m. Tuesday at the I-35W interchange. Traffic will be routed to Meacham Boulevard.

Also, traffic trying to get from I-35W to Loop 820 will be affected. All direct connectors from northbound and southbound I-35W will be closed, and traffic there will be directed to Meacham Boulevard, too.

The construction will also have a daytime impact. All lanes of the southbound I-35W frontage road will be closed from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday from Great Southwest Parkway to Gemini Place (near the Cracker Barrel restaurant). Traffic in that area will be redirected to Mark IV Parkway.

## Stay informed

Sometimes the I-35W traffic is unavoidable. All it takes is one well-placed accident, and the corridor can clog up for an entire afternoon.

But there are ways to avoid more predictable forms of congestion such as construction-related lane closures, lane shifts and detours. Information about those inconveniences is almost always posted well in advance of the headache.

One really good place to get lane closure information is [Northtarrantexpress.com](http://Northtarrantexpress.com). That site is operated by the contractors handling the massive project, and they update it aggressively.

Also, the *Star-Telegram* keeps a close eye on the I-35W expansion project online and in print. Besides our website and mobile app, you can follow some of our reporters on Twitter, and most articles are posted on Facebook.

## What's the point?

So what exactly is the reason for all the mess? It's a \$1.4 billion effort to modernize the I-35W corridor from Interstate 30 near downtown Fort Worth to just north of the U.S. 287 "Decatur cutoff" south of Alliance Airport.

That corridor is perpetually ranked as one of the most congested areas in Texas, and the ramps, bridges and lane configurations are horribly out of date.

The main lanes and bridges are being rebuilt and modern ramps are being added. Some frontage roads are also being rebuilt, although there will still be spots where the access roads aren't continuous. (The state and its private-sector partners couldn't come up with the money to do everything they wanted.)

But the biggest change will be the addition of two toll lanes in each direction, making it possible for those with the will and wherewithal to essentially buy their way out of congestion.

The project is scheduled to be completed by 2018, and contractors say they are still on course to meet that deadline despite extensive delays caused by the record spring rains.

## Road will be TollTag friendly

Because the rebuilt I-35W will have a combination of free lanes and toll lanes, it will be a TollTag-friendly corridor. What does that mean? It means that if you have a TollTag and have disposable income for toll roads, your stress level will likely be a lot lower on the I-35W corridor than drivers on the toll-free lanes.

The toll lanes will be electronic, meaning there are no tollbooths. Motorists can either open a TollTag account and place a sticker on their windshield or simply drive the road and allow their license plate to be photographed so they can be sent a bill. Problem is, those without a TollTag can expect to pay about 50 percent more in tolls.

So if you plan on using the toll lanes with any regularity, getting a TollTag is the smart move.

If you have experience on Houston's EZ Tag lanes or the state-run TxTag lanes in Austin and a handful of other areas, those windshield stickers will also work seamlessly on I-35W.

## What else can I do?

If you don't want to deal with the traffic yourself, keep in mind you can always take the bus. The Fort Worth Transportation Authority is operating a park-and-ride lot near Alliance Town Center. It's called the Route 63 North Park and Ride Express.

Riding is simple. It's an express route that goes directly to and from downtown Fort Worth, with several stops in the downtown area and a terminus at the Intermodal Transportation Center, 1001 Jones St.

To try the service, drive or get a ride to the park-and-ride lot, which is on the southbound I-35W frontage road between Golden Triangle Boulevard and Heritage Trace Parkway. Buses leave at 5:40, 6:15 and 6:40 a.m., with return trips arriving at the lot each afternoon at 5:05, 6:05 and 6:45.

A day pass is \$3.50, and cheaper fares are available for youths, seniors and people with disabilities, as well as those who buy weekly, monthly or even yearly passes.

Passes can be bought on board the buses, at the intermodal center and a handful of other locations operated by the transportation authority, also known as the T.

The bus doesn't have a magic way to get out of congestion. It uses the same crowded roads as everyone else. The benefit is that riders can leave the driving to someone else and either get some work done, meet some new friends or take a nap during the commute.

*Gordon Dickson, 817-390-7796*

*Twitter: @gdickson*



## MORE YOUR COMMUTE

---

## You May Like

Sponsored Links by Taboola

### How This Razor is Disrupting a \$13 Billion Industry

Dollar Shave Club

### Claim These 14 Senior Benefits You Didn't Know You Qualified For...

Newsmax

### NYC's Most Famous '90s It Girls — Where Are They Now?