



End in sight for area freeway projects

April 10, 2013

By A. Lee Graham

lgraham@bizpress.net

Motorists frustrated by Interstate 35W gridlock have some relief on the horizon, with the first phase of a \$1.6-billion reconstruction effort expected to reach completion in 2017.

"The north section is still in its original configuration, which is kind of hard to believe," said Scott Hall, project manager with the Texas Department of Transportation, describing part of the freeway and its layout when opened in 1958.

Speaking at the April 10 quarterly meeting of the 35W Coalition in a hotel meeting room in north Fort Worth, Hall described freeway expansion as vital to accommodate the 270,000 vehicles expected to traverse the roadway each day by 2030. That's compared to 144,000 vehicles now using the freeway.

Construction is set to begin in May on one of two phases, a \$244 million effort calling for expanding the freeway from North Loop 820 to U.S. 81-287, with the stretch expected to open for traffic in 2017.

The second phase is expected to expand the freeway from Interstate 30 to North Loop 820 by rebuilding existing lanes and adding two new managed toll lanes in each direction. Construction for the \$1.4-billion portion is expected to begin in mid-2013 and reach fruition in 2018.

Funding the project are TxDOT, the U.S. Department of Transportation, the North Central Texas Council of Governments, private activity bonds issued by project developer NTE Mobility Partners and private equity investors.

"We've all been waiting a long time for this. We're at the gateway," said Mac Churchill, coalition chairman.

North Tarrant Express

Meanwhile, progress continues along the North Tarrant Express, the \$2.5-billion project set to widen North Loop 820 and the Texas 121-183 corridor.

"Things are certainly on the downhill side," said Robert Hinkle, director of corporate affairs for the TxDOT project.

"It is going to be a huge asset for the state of Texas," said Hinkle, describing construction as about halfway done for a project already under construction for three years.

ast segments, with the western portion between Interstate 35W and Texas 121 and the city of Euless just east of where Texas 121 veers

complete and should reach completion in 2015, Hinkle said.

Tower 55

Meanwhile, a BNSF Railway official applauded the city of Fort Worth for helping fund Tower 55 improvements. BNSF and Union Pacific Railroad tracks meet at the intersection, located southeast of downtown near the I-30-35W interchange.

"It's a great project for the railroad, it's a great project for the community," said Aaron Hegeman, director of public-private partnerships with Fort Worth-based BNSF.

The \$101-million project will add an additional north-south track through the intersection and improved signaling, as well as replace railroad bridges and improve city streets and intersections to support grade-crossing closures.

At its April 9 regular meeting, the Fort Worth City Council agreed to chip in \$1 million for the Tower 55 project, with BNSF and Union Pacific Railroad ponying up \$65.3 million collectively; TxDOT, \$1 million; and a federal grant, \$1 million. That's from the U.S. Department of Transportation's TIGER II (Transportation, Investment Generating Economic Recovery) grant.

Work is expected to reach completion in late 2014.

"We're really running and gunning on it, Things will be a little crazy for the next year and a half or so," said Hegeman, referring to construction.

Meanwhile, a coalition leader bemoaned what he called an "orange cone problem."

"The [state] Legislature doesn't think we have a transportation problem," said Russell Laughlin, coalition president and senior vice president of Hillwood Properties, pointing to orange construction cones that sometimes lead observers to think all road construction needs are being met.

Coming to your inbox each week

STEP INSIDE
Fort Worth

A weekly e-video featuring leaders
in Fort Worth business.

Proudly brought to you by

25th Fort Worth BusinessPress **50th Hahnfeldt-Horner-Stanford**
anniversary anniversary

ARE YOU IN OR ARE YOU OUT?



Pinnacle Bank
THE WAY BANKING SHOULD BE

PINNBANKTXMORTGAGE.COM

MEMBER FDIC

FWOPERA

**SPRING
FLING**

– CLICK HERE FOR THE DEETS –

2013 INTERNATIONAL AWARD OF EXCELLENCE IN CONSERVATION

APRIL 11, AT 6:30 P.M.

THE CELEBRATION WILL BE HELD AT
THE WORTHINGTON RENAISSANCE HOTEL

HONORING ROBERT K. WATSON
AND FEATURING THE INAUGURAL REGIONAL
SUSTAINABILITY AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Join us this evening as our recipients personally accept their
awards. To reserve these coveted individual seats or corporate/
private tables, visit www.BRIT.org or call 817.332.4441.

**BOTANICAL RESEARCH
INSTITUTE OF TEXAS**

MBA
Fort Worth & Online

T

Tarleton State University
Southwest Metroplex Center

TARLETON.EDU/FORTWORTH

But that's not the case as coalition leaders lobby for transportation dollars as the 83rd Legislature convenes in Austin.

With the state facing a \$215 billion shortfall in transportation funding in the next 20 years, according to the coalition, it described the need to ensure funding for existing and planned projects as vital.

To that end, it is lobbying support for several bills, including House Bill 479, aimed at stopping the practice of diverting gas taxes and other funds from TxDOT to the Department of Public Safety and instead directing those funds for transportation purposes. Funding to the DPS would be replaced by general revenue.

Also receiving coalition support is H.B. 3664, which would boost transportation funds by increasing vehicle registration fees by different amounts depending on vehicle type. Both bills were scheduled to be heard on Wednesday April 10 by the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Budget Transparency and Reform.

"These are pretty good bills that need some light of day," Laughlin said.

[< back](#)

[Like](#) 0 [Tweet](#) 0 [email](#)



[Comment](#)

Facebook social plugin

**Join The Discussion**

Twitter

Facebook

Reader Poll



Add a comment...

Comment

Facebook social plugin



**Doing its part
in the community**

JERRY DURANT
AUTOGROUP



HWY 80 at I-20,
Weatherford, Texas

JerrysWeatherford.com

1 (800) 44-Jerry

© 2013 Fort Worth Business Press | [Contact](#) | [Site map](#)