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Star-Telegram

Fort Worth drivers can watch dirt fly while stalled on I-35W

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Think you've seen construction-related traffic backups with all the work being done on Tarrant County freeways?

Wait 'til the dirt starts flying this summer on Interstate 35W from downtown north to Loop 820.

Once that project starts, the 6.5-mile stretch of freeway (use that term carefully) is expected to be substantially messed-up for around five years.

The work includes a 3.7-mile stretch from Interstate 30 to Texas 183 (N.E. 28th Street) that already is the most congested road in the state, according to the Texas Department of Transportation and the Texas A&M Transportation Institute.

If you were able to catch a time when you could drive an unobstructed I-35W from downtown to 28th Street today, it might take only about four minutes. But if you hit peak traffic, you should plan on almost 30 minutes, the Transportation Department says in its annual ["100 Congested Roadways"](#) ranking.

And remember that this is I-35, a key north-south commercial trucking route. Creeping along in a backup, you can really get to know what the tail end of that tractor-trailer in front of you looks like.

Of course, truckers might have a higher viewpoint from their cabs, but it's no fun for them, either.

If you want a preview of what the construction experience will be like, head a little farther north to the I-35W segment between Loop 820 and U.S. 81/287. Work there started a few weeks ago.

It's a 3.6-mile project, and even at less-than-peak weekend travel times, the distance can swallow 30 minutes of your time.

The Transportation Department is in charge of that part of the work. It's expected to cost \$244 million, financed with state-issued bonds.

The \$1.4 billion downtown-to-Loop 820 portion, including the I-35W/Loop 820 interchange (already well underway), will be built by NTE Mobility Partners, headed by Cintra US, the American arm of a company based in Madrid.

NTE Mobility Partners also is building the 13.5-mile North Tarrant Express project to expand Loop 820 from I-35W to Industrial Boulevard in Euless. When it's all done, the company and its investors will maintain the new roads and receive revenue from toll lanes.

You can follow the work's progress and get help finding alternate routes on the [northtarrantexpress.com](#) and [Transportation Department](#) websites.