

Fort Worth

SEPTEMBER 21, 2015

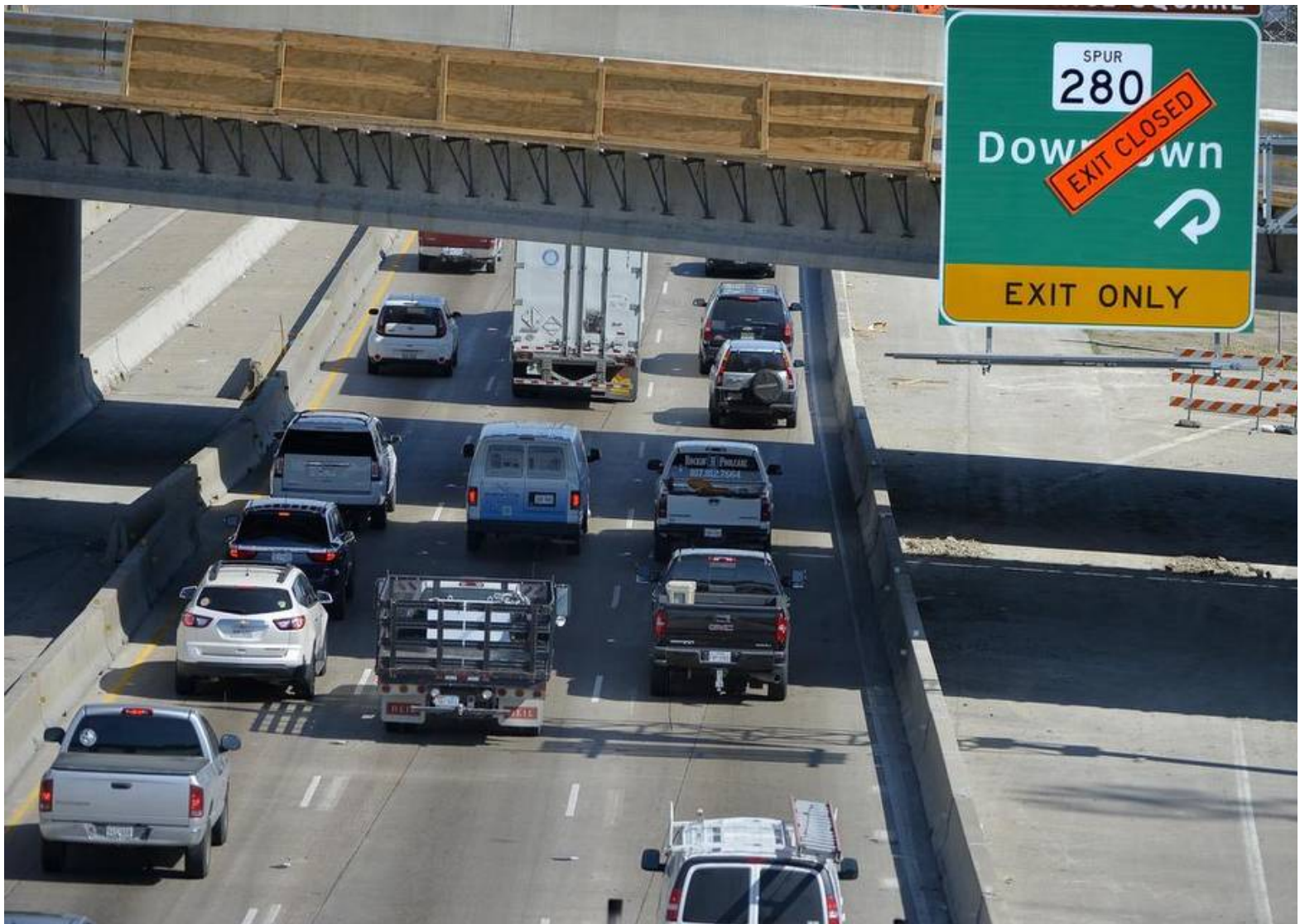
Road work in high gear on I-35W in north Fort Worth

HIGHLIGHTS

Only 26 percent of work in I-35W corridor done

At least potholes have been filled

On track for September 2018 completion





BY GORDON DICKSON

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FORT WORTH — For commuters, the bad news is another three years of work remains on the extreme makeover of the Interstate 35W corridor in north Fort Worth.

Which means the regular closings of on- and off-ramps, connectors and freeway lanes will continue.

But there are bits of good news as well.

For starters, the project is 26 percent complete.

The \$1.4 billion North Tarrant Express I-35W project, which will improve the main lanes and add toll lanes from Interstate 30 to just north of U.S. 287 near Heritage Trace Parkway, is scheduled to be completed in September 2018.

Also, dozens of pesky potholes that pocked the ground after spring rains on I-35W main lanes and bridges — and caused more than a few wrecks — have been filled.

“The highway was in bad shape to begin with and we have gone above and beyond the contract requirements since taking over operations and maintenance of the corridor,” said Robert Hinkle, spokesman for North Tarrant Express Mobility Partners, the project developer. “We have spent over \$1 million, not only making Interstate 35W safer, but making it more comfortable for motorists.”



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Robert Hinkle, North Tarrant Express Mobility Partners, on I-35W development

The potholes were the most common complaints from motorists, said Bryan Beck, Fort Worth transportation czar. He said the problem areas included near the 28th Street and Long Avenue bridges, as well as near Northside Drive.

“At the beginning of the summer we heard from a lot of people who were angered and concerned regarding the condition of the road, and we are happy they [contractors] responded,” Beck said.

THE STRETCH OF FREEWAY UNDER RECONSTRUCTION IS ONE OF THE MOST-CONGESTED IN TEXAS.

Spur 280 a daily clog

While the work in north Fort Worth provides a steady diet of lane switches, drivers can expect continued headaches in the area of I-35W and Spur 280 near downtown.

Spur 280 is one of the main entrances and exits to and from downtown Fort Worth, and recent lane closures and detours have made it difficult to get in and out of downtown since February. The work has also clogged I-35W main lanes for those just trying to pass by downtown, between Interstate 30 and Texas 121.

Although three main lanes in each direction have been maintained on I-35W in that area, the loss of an exit lane from northbound I-35W to Texas 121 has caused long backups of vehicles on Spur 280 — including those belonging to motorists trying to get out of downtown, as well as those trying to connect from I-30 to I-35W.

Nightly lane closures of I-35W lanes in that area are scheduled to continue this week. The alternating closures typically occur between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m.

Also, a direct connector from northbound I-35W to westbound Spur 280 is scheduled to remain in place through January, according to the North Tarrant Express website. Motorists instead are asked to follow a detour to Pharr Street.

Major exit closed Oct. 1

While the traffic congestion has increased, some accomplishments in the first year of I-35W reconstruction south of Loop 820 include:

- Demolition of the original 28th Street bridge.
- Placement of beams at Meacham Boulevard, near Texas 121 and the I-35W/Loop 820 interchange.
- Setting of precast panels and pouring of decks near the interchange.
- Utility relocation throughout the work zone.

Workers are currently drilling shafts for future columns and bridges, said Heather DeLapp, spokeswoman for North Tarrant Infrastructure, which is performing the construction.

A major upcoming change for motorists will be Oct. 1, when the northbound off-ramp from I-35W to North Beach Street will be closed. That closure will continue through the end of the year, she said, and motorists will be asked to use the Meacham Boulevard off-ramp instead.

“This is necessary to build the new main lane direct connectors from northbound I-35W to eastbound and westbound I-820,” DeLapp said in an email.

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**Phillip Davis** · Leader at ELITE Asphalt LLC

North Texas Express has hired Elite Asphalt to do all the repairs. I work for Elite Asphalt and are crews have have been working from 9pm till 5am every day. Believe me they are really trying to get these roads in good shape to travel.and are very nice to work with.

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