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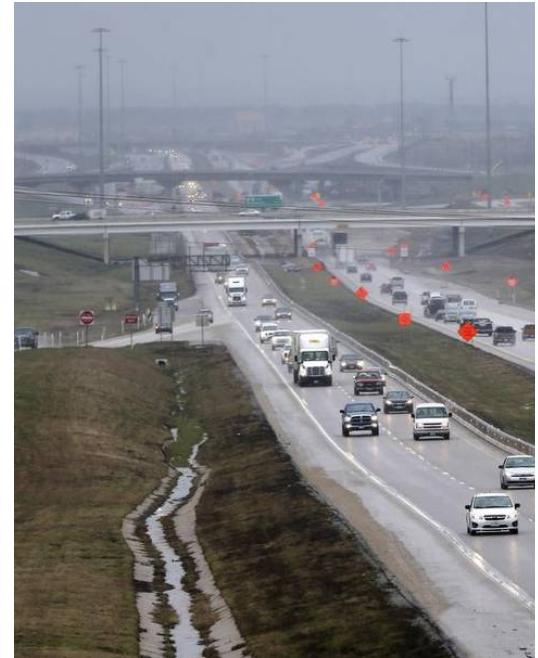
# Toll lanes to Alliance Airport? I-35W expansion may push farther through north Fort Worth

## HIGHLIGHTS

Developer wants to rebuild I-35W from U.S. 287 to Alliance Airport

Negotiations ongoing with Texas Department of Transportation

More orange-barrel pain, but lots of long-term gain for motorists



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FORT WORTH — The concrete hasn't even been poured yet on portions of Interstate 35W, which is being expanded and modernized to the tune of \$1.6 billion from I-30 near downtown Fort Worth to the U.S. 287 "Decatur cutoff."

But even as that work continues through 2018, the private developer heading up that project is offering to extend the work an additional 8 miles to the north. The result could be two new toll lanes in each direction, as well as rebuilt main lanes and frontage roads, all the way to Eagle Parkway on the north edge of Alliance Airport.

The developer, North Tarrant Express Mobility Partners, has submitted an offer to extend the I-35W expansion and is in negotiations with the Texas Department of Transportation.

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**EVERYBODY NEEDS TO GET ON THE BUS AND FINISH THIS PROJECT.**

Russell Laughlin, Hillwood Development executive vice president

State officials declined to release specifics of the developer's offer, except to say the project would require no direct appropriation of state highway funds. Instead, the developer would bring in the money needed to pay for construction, and get reimbursed over several decades by collecting money paid on the managed toll lanes.

Area real estate sources say they're excited about the prospect of the I-35W project expanding farther north. Even though it means more orange barrel madness for motorists in the corridor, possibly through late 2020, the long-term benefit is wide-open driving spaces for future generations.

"It needs to happen. Everybody needs to get on the bus and finish this project," said Russell Laughlin, an executive vice president for Hillwood Development and longtime president of a transportation advocacy group known as the 35W Coalition.

### Keeping pace

If the state accepts NTE Mobility Partners' offer, the extension will bring improvements to the corridor years if not decades earlier than previously planned, state officials said.

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### I-35W EXPANSION WOULD CONTINUE THROUGH LATE 2020, IF THE STATE AGREES TO LET A DEVELOPER EXTEND TOLL LANES TO ALLIANCE AIRPORT.

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The road work would help Fort Worth and its neighbors keep pace with the almost frenetic residential and commercial growth in the city's far northern reaches.

A massive development known as Champions Circle is underway just south of Texas Motor Speedway. Also, the Dallas-Fort Worth area's official transportation planning body, the Regional Transportation Council, recently approved funding to build I-35W frontage roads suitable for commercial development between the speedway and Alliance Airport.

"Our intermodal facility is expanding. Our white-collar jobs are expanding," Laughlin said. "Our truck traffic continues to grow."

### Work in progress

If the developer and the state agency can agree on extending the I-35W improvements to Alliance Airport, that work could begin by the middle of next year and be completed by late 2020, said Jodi Hodges, spokeswoman for the Transportation Department.

Meanwhile, farther to the south, work on I-35W from near U.S. 287 to Northeast Loop 820 is on schedule to be completed by late summer or early fall of next year, said Brian Barth, the state agency's Fort Worth district engineer.

The agency has worked closely with employers such as BNSF Railway, which operates its world headquarters in the area, to communicate plans about lane closures, especially at the heavily traveled Western Center Boulevard underpass, Barth said.

Also, the northbound I-35W entrance ramp just north of Western Center Boulevard is scheduled to reopen in December, so motorists will no longer have to stay on the frontage road until beyond U.S. 287 to get on the interstate, he said.

[How to Use the NTE TEXpress Lanes](#)



## Link to downtown

South of Northeast Loop 820, the work is 39 percent done and on schedule for completion in 2018, NTE Mobility Partners spokesman Robert Hinkle said.

Some negotiations for right-of-way improvements near Long Avenue have been slow because of concerns expressed by area railroads, he said. The corridor is used not only by BNSF and Union Pacific Railroad, but also the Fort Worth & Western short line.

“We’ve had some railroad issues. I understand they’ve been kind of dragging their feet, but my understanding now is they’re close to being resolved,” Hinkle told the Fort Worth City Council during a recent pre-council briefing.

The project employs about 1,265 workers per day.

Hinkle also said there would be no major lane shifts or closures from Dec. 22 to 27 and Dec. 30 to Jan. 2, to accommodate holiday travelers.



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Council members expressed solid support for continuing the I-35W expansion.

“It is long-term gain for short-term pain,” said Councilman Sal Espino, whose district includes the area.

At Espino’s urging, Barth also disclosed to the council that the state Transportation Department is planning improvements to Farm Road 156 between Northeast Loop 820 and U.S. 287, to help manage traffic in fast-growing far north Fort Worth, Haslet and a handful of other adjacent communities.

Barth said statewide voter approval of two recent propositions freed up additional sources of state funding for nontoll road work, which may speed improvements on Farm Road 156.

“We think we will be able to start construction in that area in 2017,” he said, adding that the improvements will include new main lanes and turn lanes.

Also, the extension of Basswood Boulevard west of I-35W, which would provide another east-west option for area motorists, is underway.

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