

I-35W work nearly done north of Loop 820 in north Fort Worth



Though you can't tell it in this photo, traffic on I-35W in north Fort Worth is less congested these days as much of the work is "substantially complete." **Max Faulkner** - Star-Telegram archives

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FORT WORTH — After a couple of years of tremendous commuting headaches on [Interstate 35W](#) in far north Fort Worth, motorists may have noticed that driving on the freeway has gotten a little better in recent weeks — at least on part of it.

The 3.6-mile portion of the road from Loop 820 north to just past the U.S. 287 "Decatur cutoff" is "substantially complete," according to a Texas Department of Transportation spokesman.

What is substantially complete?

"The main lanes and frontage roads are in their final location. The TEXPress lanes are in their final location," Texas Department of Transportation spokesman Michael Peters said.

TEXPress is a brand name for the managed toll lanes in the middle of the freeway. Once the project is complete, motorists will have the option to stay on the freeway main lanes, which will remain toll-free, or pay a toll to use the managed lanes and essentially buy their way out of traffic.

TEXPress lanes are already operating Loop 820 and Texas 121/183 just east of the I-35W project, and on LBJ Freeway in north Dallas.

TEXPress lane tolls are collected electronically. Motorists can either have tolls deducted automatically by placing a TollTag on their windshield, or simply drive in the toll lanes and allow the electronic computerized system to photograph their license plate and send the registered owner a bill in the mail.

Even though the northern portion of the I-35W project is substantially complete, Peters said a handful of important pieces of work remain on the \$244 million project. For example:

- In the coming weeks, once the warmer weather arrives for good, the main lanes and frontage roads will need to be temporarily closed so that crews can add a final couple of inches of asphalt. Right now, motorists are driving on a new road bed, but without that final layer of pavement.
- A northbound frontage road and ramp to I-35W between Basswood Boulevard and North Tarrant Parkway is still under construction, and is scheduled to be completed later in the spring.
- Even though the pavement is ready for the TEXPress lanes, it may be a few months before it can be used. Just to the south, a private contractor known as North Tarrant Infrastructure is working on rebuilding the I-35W/Loop 820 interchange and completing the 6.5-mile stretch of I-35W south to downtown Fort Worth. The toll lanes north of Loop 820 can't be opened until more progress is made on the road to the south.

Final completion of the entire I-35W corridor is still about a year away, project spokesman Robert Hinkle told attendees at the [Northeast Tarrant Transportation Summit](#) last week in Hurst.

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