

## Frequently asked questions for I-35W@94

### Why is this project necessary?

The stretch of I-35W from 43<sup>rd</sup> Street to I-94 in Minneapolis was built more than 50 years ago. It has not had a lot of work done to it, other than short-term repairs, since it was opened. Heavy traffic volumes and Minnesota's harsh winters take a toll on concrete and asphalt. MnDOT has a responsibility to provide safe and efficient roads. These fixes will add years to the freeway and do things to improve traffic movement.

### How much does it cost?

\$239 million. The cost is being shared by the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Hennepin County, Minneapolis and Metro Transit.

### How long does the project take?

The project started in September 2017 and is expected to finish by fall 2021. MnDOT and its partners worked to find the quickest and most efficient way to get the project done as quickly as possible, given the limited time available to do construction work and the amount of work scheduled to be done.

### What are the benefits of the project?

I-35W will be reconstructed from 43<sup>rd</sup> Street (where the Crosstown project ended) to I-94 near downtown Minneapolis. MnDOT will replace 11 bridges, repair four more, add ramps at 28<sup>th</sup> Street going north on I-35W and going south on I-35W to Lake Street. Ramps from I-35W to north to I-94 west and from I-94 east to I-35W south will be rebuilt. MnPASS lanes will be added. Many new utilities are being installed.

### What about bus riders?

For transit users, a \$20 million bus station will be built in the middle of I-35W at Lake Street that is safer and more accessible than what currently exists. More than 100 buses an hour will use it during peak times, taking riders into downtown in about seven minutes. This route is part of Metro Transit's Orange Line.

## **What benefits are there for walkers and bicyclists?**

Walkers and bikers get new, wider and more accessible bridges that cross I-35W at 24<sup>th</sup> Street and 40<sup>th</sup> Street.

## **What do you tell motorists about the closures and traffic hassles?**

We apologize for the inconvenience. We know the construction is challenging. MnDOT has worked with our partners to provide many options for people to get where they want. We suggest people plan ahead, give themselves lots of time and please be patient.

## **Why is I-35W North to I-94 west ramp closed three years?**

The ramp is being rebuilt and is large and complex. The ramp will move from landing cars in the right lane to the far left lane where motorists headed west will have their own lane through the Lowry Tunnel. Other work and safety concerns will require the ramp to be closed for remainder of the project in 2021.

## **Are crews working 24 hours a day and get this done faster?**

Crews started working 24 hours in June. The work area is close to where people live and it is important to keep noise reduced at night so people can get rest. MnDOT has an agreement with the city of Minneapolis that allows it to work outside the city's noise ordinance hours. That work is limited to moving dirt and pouring concrete. Crews cannot do some of the more noisy activities such as demolition, concrete crushing, saw cutting and pile driving.

## **Do you coordinate with Hennepin County and Minneapolis to avoid simultaneous closures?**

Yes. Staff from MnDOT, City of Minneapolis, Metro Transit and Hennepin County meet regularly to discuss projects and scheduling to avoid closures in the same area at the same time. Because all three groups have lots of work to do and winter imposes a tight time-table for completing work, sometimes projects that are nearby must go on at the same time. All efforts are made to avoid it if possible.

## **Why aren't you adding more lanes?**

MnDOT is adding MnPASS lanes in both direction. MnPASS lanes are for free for carpoolers, transit, motorcycles and solo drivers for a fee based on how busy the road is. MnPASS lanes carry more people than general purpose lanes. MnDOT is also doing a number of things that should reduce slowdowns and backups in some areas.

The new ramps at 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue should reduce congestion at 31<sup>st</sup> Street and Lake. The new ramp at Lake Street should reduce backups at the 36<sup>th</sup> Street ramp.

The new I-35W north to I-94 west ramp will take traffic to the left side of the freeway instead of the right where it is now. This will take it out of traffic trying to get to the Hennepin and Lyndale exit and give it straight shot through the Lowry Tunnel. This should reduce congestion on the ramp. The new ramp from I-94 east to I-35W south should reduce congestion there and I-94 west motorists going to I-35W south will get an added lane to Lake Street providing more time for merging and reducing congestion.

There will be space for an additional lane to be built when it is deemed necessary and money is available.

## **What does this project mean for the Minneapolis neighborhoods?**

MnDOT understands this project will have an effect on the neighborhoods. We apologize for the inconvenience. Residents can expect to see additional traffic, noise, road and sidewalk closures. MnDOT and the City of Minneapolis are working to minimize the disruptions and the length of closures. If you see someone breaking the law such as speeding or driving on lawns call the police. MnDOT and the city will monitor traffic patterns to determine if changes are needed.

Crews will work with care to reduce noise during nighttime work.