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Grand Prairie Anticipating SH 161 Extension

NTTA expects to open main lanes in October

By **Christine Lee** | Friday, Jun 1, 2012 | Updated 6:39 PM CDT



Christine Lee, NBC 5 Grand Prairie Reporter

The much anticipated President George Bush Turnpike western extension is just a few month away from opening.

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The much-anticipated
President George Bush

Turnpike western extension is now just a few months from opening.

The North Texas Tollway Authority plans to open the main lanes of the State Highway 161 western extension in October.

Wallace Heimer, NTTA chief engineer of construction, said building a road that crosses two interstate highways that are major east-west thoroughfares can get complicated.

"Building a project when hanging beams over those roadways is always going to be a challenge," he said.

Heimer said teaming with the Texas Department of Transportation saved the NTTA both money and time on the project.

In preparation for the SH 161 construction, TxDOT rebuilt a portion of Interstate 30, adding bridges so that the President George Bush Turnpike could flow underneath the interstate.

Heimer said more than 200 crew members are working on the project. Currently, they are digging out the space under I-30 and pouring concrete for the large bridge supports that will carry traffic from SH 161 to I-30.

"At the point we're at now, people can begin to visualize what it is that we're doing, that there is going to be a highway underneath here," he said.

Grand Prairie is counting down the days until the extension opens. The 11.5-mile link from State Highway 183 to Interstate 20 is expected to make commuting easier, as well as bring a lot of business to the city.

"It opens up the door for the commercial development," said Sholeh Karimi, city traffic engineer. "These are prime land around [the] 161 frontage road."

Grand Prairie is also extending and widening Lake Ridge Parkway. The project will connect commuters from Interstate 20 down to Joe Pool Lake and is expected in December.

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