

Dallas North Tollway closures likely to snarl weekend traffic



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Published: 16 January 2014 11:10 PM

Updated: 16 January 2014 11:10 PM

Think traffic on Dallas North Tollway backs up during rush hour? Wait until you see it this weekend.

Both directions of the major north-south thoroughfare around LBJ Freeway will be reduced to one lane — if not closed entirely — for most of this weekend. The demolition of LBJ's old main lanes over the tollway is prompting the closures.

So if you're a Dallas resident trying to hit the Galleria or a suburbanite heading to Saturday's Mavericks game, you'll want to plan for delays and detours.

"You're going to have backups," said Heather DeLapp, a spokeswoman for LBJ contractor Trinity Infrastructure.

The affected DNT portion is from Spring Valley Road to Harvest Hill Road. Harvest Hill is just south of LBJ. The work will also affect the interchanges between LBJ and the tollway. But not everything will be closed down all at once. Trinity has split the work into five phases to minimize the impact on weekend drivers.

"We want to be able to tell folks, 'During this window of time, these are the closures you're looking at,'" DeLapp said.

All southbound tollway lanes will be closed from Friday night to midday Saturday. Only one lane will be getting by for the rest of the weekend, except for a nine-hour window Sunday when all southbound lanes are open.

Northbound lanes will be closed from Saturday night to midday Sunday. Only one lane in that direction will get by for the rest of the weekend, except for a nine-hour window Saturday when all lanes are open.

That means folks driving south Saturday afternoon and returning north late Saturday night will face major delays.

Weekday commuters may have already noticed electronic signs in place that will warn motorists and direct them through detours. Southbound drivers will be detoured to Inwood Road. Northbound drivers will be forced to take the tollway's access road.

Traffic lights on the detours will be retimed to help smooth out any backups.

"That way there will be more green given to that northbound, southbound traffic," DeLapp said.

Further complicating matters is work that the North Texas Tollway Authority, which operates the tollway, is doing this weekend. The northbound Frankford Road exit ramp will be closed from Saturday to Monday morning. There will also be one to two northbound lanes closed from Keller Springs Road to Frankford for much of the weekend. One to two southbound lanes from Trinity Mills Road to Arapaho Road will also be closed for most of Sunday.

Even though LBJ is spurring the major closures, drivers on that freeway won't be affected if they have no plans to connect to the tollway. That's because drivers started using its new main lanes last year. What's being torn down this weekend will be replaced by the highway's new tolled express lanes.

LBJ is undergoing a \$2.7 billion expansion, which is scheduled to be completed in December 2015. The first phase of the expansion, a 3.2-mile stretch from Preston Road to Greenville Avenue, opened last month.

After slowing down during the holidays, construction crews will work around-the-clock for the next two years to finish the expansion. While this weekend's work may be a headache for drivers, DeLapp said LBJ's nearly nonstop construction schedule minimizes the overall time motorists will face delays.

"The project would have taken 15 years to build rather than five," she said.

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This will be interesting to see on Monday.

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