

Fort Worth BusinessPress

DFW Connector construction set to start in February

BY LESLIE WIMMER

January 11, 2010

Construction on the first phase of the DFW Connector highway expansion project is set to start on Feb. 15.

The project, which will expand lanes on 8.4 miles of state highways 121 and 114 through Southlake, Grapevine and the north entrance to Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, is expected to cost more than \$1 billion, double traffic capacity and be completed by the end of 2014. The Texas Department of Transportation began researching and planning for the Connector in September 1996.

The Department of Transportation will oversee construction and operation of the project. But, through a comprehensive development agreement reached in October 2009, NorthGate Constructors, a joint business venture between Kiewit Texas Construction and Zachry Construction Corp., has been in charge of the development, design and construction of the project.

Selma Stockstill, public information manager for NorthGate, said a priority for NorthGate is to keep traffic flowing as work along the corridor begins.

“During construction, every effort will be made to keep motorists moving,” she said. “This includes building temporary pavement to shift traffic lanes, and keeping all lanes open during peak travel times.”

Lane closures are scheduled during night hours and off-peak travel times, she said.

The project will rebuild portions of state highways 114, 121 and 26, along with Farm to Market road 1709. Construction will include expanding lanes, connecting frontage roads, reconstructing bridges and interchanges, and constructing new toll lanes.

Currently, State Highway 114 through the project area has eight main lanes and four frontage road lanes, but after construction it’s expected to have 13 to 14 main lanes as well as four managed lanes, and six to seven frontage road lanes.

At the widest point in the project’s plans, State Highway 114 between Texan Trail and International Parkway will be more than 20 lanes wide. Two toll lanes will be constructed on Highway 114 from east of the Dallas County line to west of the State Highway 121 split.

Toll revenue will not be used to fund construction, but instead for operation and

maintenance and later for future projects in the region. According to the Department of Transportation, the Connector project has been publicly funded through \$667 million in public gas taxes, \$250 million in federal stimulus funds and \$107 million in bond proceeds for right of way acquisitions.

Andy Bell, vice president of planning for D/FW Airport, said he expects the DFW Connector to make commuting to and from the airport much easier for employees and passengers.

“Once it’s built it’s going to be a godsend in terms of the added capacity it’s going to have, and the channeling of vehicles, additional ramps and routes,” he said. “If you want to have any kind of schedule, connecting to a flight, to get away from work and get home, you have to try to stay off of the Connector right now. When there’s a little hiccup, either on the south or north side [of the airport], when there’s an accident, the whole system shuts down.”

Bell said when accidents are close to either of D/FW Airport’s entrances, traffic will back so far it clogs traffic inside of the airport’s toll booths.

In total, the DFW Connector project has seven segments. The four largest segments include constructing four to six free, general purpose lanes along State Highway 114 between State Highway 1709 and William D. Tate Avenue. Also, three to five northbound general purpose lanes and three southbound general purpose lanes will be constructed along State Highway 121 near the 114 merge.

Six to eight westbound general purpose lanes and six eastbound general purpose lanes will be constructed along both state highways 114 and 121 from the merge near William D. Tate Avenue to Interlineal Parkway. And, four to seven northbound general purpose lanes and three to six southbound general purpose lanes will be constructed along state highway 121 between the north entrance to D/FW Airport and Interstate 635.

A one-way trip on the project’s tolled lanes is expected to cost about 64 cents when the Connector opens, Stockstill said.

Bell said he expects the managed lanes to be helpful for drivers who want to avoid airport entrance traffic.

“If you want to just get through, say coming from the west to downtown Dallas, you can get in those lanes and just get a nice flow right through, as opposed to today where you’ve got to mix in with everything, everyone trying to get over onto 635,” he said. “It really simplifies the traffic and creates more lanes and ramps for people.”

On the Web: www.dfwconnector.com

Questions & Comments [FortWorthBusinessPress.com](http://www.fwbusinesspress.com) Last updated on 03-May-2007.
Copyright © 2010 by Fort Worth Business Press.