

LOCAL AUGUST 16, 2016 5:36 PM

# 95th Street-Interstate 35 interchange in Lenexa opens for Wednesday morning's rush hour



New interchange on I-35 and 95th St. prepares to open to the public 1:45



1 of 5



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The celebration began early as state and city officials along with business owners gathered Tuesday at the rebuilt 95th Street and Interstate 35 interchange in Lenexa for a ribbon-cutting to mark its completion.

“We are about to make a lot of people very happy here,” said interim Kansas Transportation Secretary Richard Carlson.

The key interchange in Johnson County will open before rush hour Wednesday morning, six months after it closed.

The interchange, which carries about 32,500 vehicles a day, and surrounding streets have been closed since February so it could be rebuilt as a diverging diamond interchange. During construction, 95th Street from Noland Road to Monrovia Street has also been closed.

The interchange is the Kansas Department of Transportation's fourth diverging diamond interchange in the Kansas City area.

“Hopefully by now, people are getting a little more used to driving on what we used to consider the wrong side of the road,” Carlson said. “But if you follow the lines, you'll have no problems making this work.”

Transportation officials hope the design will increase traffic flow and safety. The completed interchange should make the daily commute faster, more efficient and more comfortable.

“I think it's going to take some time for us to fully appreciate and understand, frankly, how the positive impact of the diverging diamond will impact the neighborhood,” said Lenexa Mayor Mike Boehm. “Not only will it improve traffic flow, but there is significantly improved access for our walking public and our bicycle public, as well.”

As part of the project, new underpasses were built at Lenexa and Marshall drives to allow frontage road traffic to flow independently of the interchange traffic, which Boehm said will have a positive impact.

The complete closure of the interchange, however, was taxing on the businesses in the area, as well as residents who live in the surrounding neighborhoods.

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## Drone view of 95th Street/I-35 Interchange ribbon cutting

Kansas and Lenexa officials along with business owners gathered for a ribbon cutting Tuesday to mark the completion of the 95th Street and Interstate 35 interchange in Lenexa. Here's a drone view of the ceremony.

Video courtesy of the Kansas Department of Transportation

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Safety to the workers and traveling public was a priority when making the decision to close the interchange, Boehm said. Other factors considered included the reduction of time it would take to complete the project, cutting a 10- to 12-month project to six months, and lower costs by not having to build temporary routes throughout the project.

“I would like to thank the businesses in the area who have endured this project the last six months and the Lenexa Chamber of Commerce for your efforts to encourage people to patronize the business in this area,” Boehm said. “I know it was a difficult time for many of you — although I have a couple tell me that reconfiguring traffic actually brought more people by and into their stores.”

Carlos Davila, store manager of O'Reilly Auto Parts at 9500 Marshall Drive in Lenexa, said business slowed down during the construction, but the store used the time to regroup and get training done. Workers also updated the inside of the store, getting it ready for the reopening of the interchange.

"It went a lot quicker than we thought — we are very glad for that," Davila said. "We appreciate their hard work and getting it done on time."

For Davila personally, the completion means he will get to work much quicker.

"It makes the drive to work and from work a lot more bearable," said Davila, who lives in Gardner.

Sheila Shockey, founder and president of the Shockey Consulting Services in Lenexa, moved to the area right before it closed.

"We have been anxiously awaiting this," Shockey said. "It really kind of seemed like it went quicker than you would think six months sounds."

Still, the closing of the interchange did have an impact. She said she leaves the office about three or four times a day. Because of the construction, it took her about 15 minutes longer per trip, as well as extra gas. Shockey, who lives in Lenexa, needs to use the interchange to get to work.

"We are going to take it tomorrow," Shockey said. "I'm driving to work on it tomorrow, by gosh."

The work is part of the \$288 million Johnson County Gateway Phase 2 project at the Interstate 435-Interstate 35-Kansas 10 interchange. Construction on Phase 2 is scheduled to be substantially completed by the end of this year.

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