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Road Work Ahead: 595 Construction Will Mean Delays

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Reporting Michael Williams E-mail

FORT LAUDERDALE (CBS4) — "Road Work Ahead" is a sign no driver wants to see. The results are sometimes just not worth the mess of construction barrels, backed-up traffic and concrete dust from the site. But South Florida is cluttered with "Road Work" signs as several projects kick off.

In Broward County, the biggest project right now is on I-595. The major east-west highway opened in 1989. It now reflects the traffic congestion that packs the region. More than 180,000 vehicles drive the expressway daily. By 2034, that number is expected to swell to 350,000.

Now, a first-of-its-kind plan is being put into place. It's an answer to the daily gridlock: reversible express lanes.

Department of Transportation Project Manager Paul Lampley says the new lanes will keep traffic flowing. "There will be three lanes eastbound in the morning and westbound in the afternoon," he told CBS4's Michael Williams.

Safety gates and signs will be built at the reverse expressway entrance and exit points at both I-75 and east of SR 7. The lanes, which will charge variable tolls, will offer direct connections to the Florida turnpike.

"It will be congestion pricing," Lampley said, "so we will guarantee the commuter a reliable trip to work or to pick up their kids or wherever they may be."

Projects like this do not happen overnight. Road work and ramp expansions, like the lengthening of the University Drive flyover to Eastbound I-595, will mean slowdowns and detours.

"We are only allowing nighttime lane closures. They will be nine at night to five in the morning," Lampley said. "There will be long-term ramp closures when we do replace some of the ramps."

Drivers will simply have to grin – or grimace – and bear it.

"I think it is going to be a mess," one driver predicted. "Gotta be better than 826, though."

"It's crazy enough already!" another motorist exclaimed. "We could do without it."

DOT engineers have been paving the way for more than a decade. The cost of the state-owned project checks in at \$1.2 billion dollars; construction is estimated to be completed by 2014.

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