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# IDOT road work kicks into gear Thursday

By Marni Pyke | Daily Herald Staff

Contact writer



Signs along I-290 warn motorists of the pending resurfacing project.

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Buzz up!

How could a year when there's so little money for road work produce so much anticipated angst for drivers?

Three answers. The Eisenhower Expressway resurfacing, the rebuild of the Edens Spur and the reconstruction of Congress Parkway.

It's a triple whammy affecting motorists in the Kane, Lake, Cook and DuPage suburbs.

The construction comes with tight federal state and local funding for capital needs.

That's why the emphasis this year is on "maintaining our existing infrastructure," said DuPage County Director of Transportation and Operations John Koz, echoing colleagues.

Illinois Department of Transportation spokeswoman Marisa Kollias noted, "it's a money thing. We're in the biggest financial crisis the state has ever seen."

If the Eisenhower resurfacing project stimulates repressed memories of endless commutes for drivers - it should. The Ike was resurfaced 11 years ago and it's time for a redo, Kollias said, adding that rebuilding the highway is just too expensive.

Even the Illinois tollway, one institution with a relatively healthy source of income despite the recession's impact, is not embarking on any new ventures. Instead it's fixing the Edens Spur.

### Stay calm

IDOT's plans to resurface the Eisenhower from Itasca to the I-90/94

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Map of upcoming projects

Here are some local construction hot spots to watch for this spring and summer.

### DuPage County

- Resurfacing on Bloomingdale Road from Route 64 to Brandon Drive.
- Resurfacing on Prospect Avenue from Irving Park to Thorndale roads.
- Resurfacing on Schmale Road from St. Charles Road to Route 64.
- Resurfacing on 75th Street from Ogden Avenue to Route 59.
- Resurfacing on Madison Street from Plainfield Road to 55th Street.
- Resurfacing on St. Charles Road from Ridford Avenue to Route 53.
- Resurfacing on York Road from Luthin Road to 31st Street.
- Resurfacing on Diehl Road from Winfield Road to Mill Street.
- Resurfacing on Ferry Road from River Road to Mill Street.
- Resurfacing on Gary Avenue from Jewell Road to St. Charles Road.
- Resurfacing on Naperville Road from Lucent Lane to Roosevelt Road.

### Kane County

- McLean Boulevard closures between Route 31 and Spring Street as part of Stearns Road extension project.
- Resurfacing on Randall Road between Silver Glen and Hopps roads.
- Resurfacing on Keslinger Road between Brundige and Pouley roads.
- Resurfacing on Bowes Road between Randall Road and McLean Boulevard.

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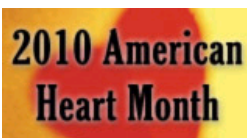
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interchange and I-355 from Army Trail Road to I-290, plus rehabilitate the Congress Parkway bridge will affect millions of motorists trying to get into the city starting April 1. The projects will last two years.

The Eisenhower \$95 million resurfacing will take away one lane in each direction along the 27-mile stretch.

The \$33 million Congress Parkway bridge work entails modernizing steel and electrical components as well as replacing the open grid deck that causes cars to vibrate with a closed, skid-resistant structure. Traffic will be reduced from four lanes to two inbound and down to one lane outbound. And once you get into the city, be prepared for Chicago's reconstruction of the north-south segment of Wacker Drive.

The Edens Spur work comprises repairs and resurfacing of 5 miles between I-294 and the Edens Expressway plus rehabilitating seven bridges. Traffic will shrink down to one lane in each direction during the \$20 million project. Work will start in early July and wrap up around late October or early November, tollway spokeswoman Joelle McGinnis said.

Usually the tollway keeps more lanes open during construction but the design of the 50-year-old spur made that problematic, McGinnis said.

She believes that "traffic volumes aren't so high that we don't think it will be a terrible problem. Traffic will slow down but I hope folks will see that the tollway commits to projects and carries them out on schedule."

Both IDOT and tollway officials said they're trying to squeeze the work into concentrated periods rather than drag it out.

So how to handle the perfect traffic storm? Psychiatrist Fatima Z. Ali advises drivers to plan ahead and leave early to avoid the angst.

But if you're stuck in gridlock, "find ways of keeping yourself busy," Ali, a clinical director at Linden Oaks Hospital in Naperville, suggests. That includes listening to relaxing jazz or classical music, known to reduce stress, and making sure your car is as comfortable as possible for long trips.

And don't assume the other drivers are out to get you.

"Other people will also get frustrated and may be doing aggravating things. It's not personal," Ali added.

"When you're in a situation like that do some deep breathing and relax so you don't get to that angry mode.

If you get angry and retaliate because you're getting frustrated - all you do is aggravate the situation."

No bold visions

There's myriad ideas for transportation in the region - the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway extension and western bypass, the Prairie Parkway, the expansion of Route 53 into Lake County. And there's limited funding.

Transportation experts say the dearth of bold new projects this year reflects the

interchange on Jericho between Hinckley and Orchard roads.

- Resurfacing on Big Timber Road between Randall Road and McLean Boulevard.

- Resurfacing on Farnsworth Avenue from Recklinger to Molitor roads.

- Resurfacing on Route 72 between I-90 and Gilberts.

- Resurfacing on Kaneville Road between Route 38 and Randall Road.

- Resurfacing on Indian Trail Road from Church to Farnsworth roads.

- Bridge reconstruction at Keslinger Road and Welch Creek.

- Bridge work at Route 56 and Blackberry Creek.

**McHenry County**

- Construction on Walkup Road between Route 176 and Crystal Springs Road.

- Construction on Rakow Road between Ackman and Virginia roads.

- Construction on Virginia Road between Route 31 and Rakow Road.

- Resurfacing on Algonquin Road between Plum Tree Road Route 14.

- Reconstruction on Haligus Road between Geneva Lane and Miller Road.

- Reconstruction on Hanson Road between Edgewood and Huntington drives.

- Reconstruction on I-47 between Kreutzer to Reed roads.

- Resurfacing on Lake-Cook Road in Barrington Hills.

- Resurfacing on Reed Road between Haligus and Lakewood roads.

**Cook County**

- Reconstruction on Dempster Street between Busse and Elmhurst roads.

- Reconstruction on Arlington Heights Road between University Drive and Lake Cook Road.

- Reconstruction on Route 21 between Willow and Sanders roads.

- Resurfacing on McHenry Road between Elmhurst and Dundee roads.

- Resurfacing on Route 53 Frontage Roads.

- Resurfacing on Barrington Road between Route 62 and I-90.

- Bridge work on Elmhurst Road at McDonald Creek.

- Resurfacing on Higgins Road westbound between Forbes Avenue and Beverly Road.

- Resurfacing on Route 19 between Schaumburg Road and Madison Drive.

**Lake County**

- Resurfacing on Route 176 in Libertyville and Grayslake.

- Resurfacing on Lake Cook Road in Barrington Hills.

- Resurfacing on Route 83 between Route 60 and Route 45.

- Resurfacing on Route 59 between Route 22 and Lake Cook Road.

- Resurfacing on Route 12 between East Street and Route 59.

- Reconstruction on Washington Street between Cemetery Road and Route 21.

- Reconstruction on North Avenue between Route 83 and Deep Lake Road.

- Reconstruction on Midlothian Road between Peterson Road and Route 137.

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economic realities.

"The vast majority of work is going to be maintaining the existing system," Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning Executive Director Randy Blankenhorn said.

"But you can't just resurface and resurface. Eventually you have to rebuild. I think when you look at new highway projects, the only way to really build them is with tolls."

But both Blankenhorn and Metropolitan Planning Council Vice President Peter Skosey say it's important to keep an eye on Congress and what it does with the long-delayed surface transportation funding bill in 2011.

The proposed bill, which provides a multiyear funding plan for transportation projects, "changes the rules of the game," Skosey said it that is seeks to give transit projects equal footing with road work.

Another future shift to fund capital improvements could be more public-private partnerships, such as Chicago did with the Chicago Skyway, leasing it to a private firm.

"You could build western access to O'Hare using public-private partnerships," Skosey said.

As individual counties gear up for a season of road work, there's uncertainty about whether the state can fund certain projects this year or if they'll end up in 2011.

The federal government's economic stimulus funding is still trickling into counties, such as DuPage that will receive about \$3.4 million for resurfacing of some arterial roads.

But there's no major congestion-relief initiatives out there, Koz said. Instead of adding lanes, the county is opting for lower-cost, high-tech solutions such as interconnecting traffic signals.

DuPage's situation is similar to Kane County, which is expected to grow from about 497,667 to 718,464 people by 2030.

"The plan should be to add capacity to roadways but there's not enough funding," Kane County Assistant Director of Transportation Manny Gomez said.

McHenry County's population is also booming, projected to reach 457,594 by 2030 compared to 314,112 now.

Unlike other collar counties, McHenry is forging ahead with transportation projects, thanks mainly to a \$50 million loan that it's paying back with revenues from an RTA sales tax.

"We're moving full-speed ahead on capacity improvements," Division of Transportation Design Manager Wally Dittrich said. "We're already looking to 2011."

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