

CTRMA breaks ground on 8-mile 183 South Expressway project

This morning, the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority broke ground on a project that may be the first major step toward traffic relief in Austin.

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The Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority and other stakeholders broke ground Wednesday morning on the 183 South Expressway -- a \$743 million project.

The CTRMA says an 8-mile stretch from 290 to 71 will go from 4 lanes to 12. 4 to 6 of those lanes on the access roads will be non-tolled.

"It doesn't just serve East Austin, it doesn't just serve Austin, it serves the entire region," said CTRMA Executive Director Mike Heiligenstein.

It's been more than 50 years since the original 183 South was built yet there hasn't been many improvements to it.

Heiligenstein says people in the area are noticing traffic getting worse with every passing year and they're not just noticing it on major roads.



"They're noticing it in their neighborhoods. Because people are using neighborhoods to get around congestion on major arterials.

In addition to a new bridge across the Colorado, the historic Montopolis Bridge will be given new life as a pedestrian and bike trail.

"It's just sort of in a state of a bit of disrepair in terms of its looks. But that's going to change with this project. It will be painted, it will be renovated, the lead will be removed from this bridge," he said.

TX Dot Commissioner Jeff Austin III says the new expressway will alleviate some truck traffic.

"What we have found is a lot of the truck traffic is not necessarily going around Austin, San Antonio, it's coming in and out a lot of short hauls. This hopefully will help with commuters, those trying to get to the airport, those commuting in and out for work," Austin said.

Senator Kirk Watson says the new 183 South will come in handy when it's I-35's turn for some improvements.

"We finally have a 10-year-plan for how we can do that. But a key part of that is that when we get to the really, really hard part on I-35, which is in downtown Austin, we need to have a way to get people around downtown and one of the best ways is going to be this road right here. And the timing will work out," Watson said.

Heiligenstein says the design phase on the project has already started. Construction is expected to begin in May.

"That's \$743 million that didn't end up on their tax base. They are not paying for this through their property tax. That's an important component. So if you use this road, you'll help pay for it. If you don't, you don't help pay for it," he said.

The 183 South project will open in phases.

Phase 1 is expected to be done in 2019, Phase 2 in early 2020.