



Washington State
Department of Transportation

I-5 M Street to Portland Avenue - HOV

Aug. 2016

I-5 HOV construction is full steam ahead!

Crews are working on a multi-year construction project to expand and improve Interstate 5 between South M Street and East L Street in Tacoma. This project will lead to many benefits for drivers and is part of a larger effort to build high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) lanes on I-5 and State Route 16 in Pierce County.

Overpass construction

Both the Pacific Avenue and McKinley Way overpasses spanning I-5 needed to be rebuilt in this project, as they both had piers - structures that support the bridge - that conflicted with the future widened I-5 lanes below.

Pacific Avenue reopens

The Pacific Avenue overpass, which has been closed since spring 2015, is slated to partially reopen on Thursday, August 18, 2016. The overpass will open to one lane in each direction, along with facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians. Within a few months, all lanes - a total of four - on the overpass will reopen, along with a 6-foot-wide sidewalk and 14-foot-wide multi-use path.

McKinley Way closes

Also on Thursday, August 18, 2016, WSDOT anticipates that the contractor will close the McKinley Way overpass for 18 months or longer, depending on weather and construction progress.

During the long-term closure, WSDOT will detour traffic, bicyclists and pedestrians to Pacific Avenue as shown on the map at right. The lengthy closure will allow crews to demolish the old overpass and rebuild the new overpass.

New span over I-705

While the overpass work is under way, crews are also busy building a new northbound I-5 bridge over I-705. That new structure will eventually carry all northbound I-5 lanes. The northbound I-5 lanes people drive on now will be converted to northbound/southbound HOV lanes.



After the Pacific Avenue overpass reopens, the McKinley Way overpass will be closed to vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians for 18 months. The detour route for vehicles uses Pacific Avenue and is shown above.

When will all this work be done?

This project is scheduled to be wrapped up in spring 2018. Work on I-5 through Tacoma, however, will continue on with two more major projects. One of those projects will build a new HOV viaduct at the I-5/SR 16 interchange and rebuild I-5 approaching the interchange, and the other project will build a new southbound I-5 bridge over the Puyallup River.

What about people trying to get to the McKinley Street Fair on Saturday, August 20?

We want to be good neighbors. Although WSODT plans to close McKinley Way on Thursday, August 18, we will accommodate Street Fair traffic by flagging one alternating lane of traffic across the McKinley (D Street) overpass from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. that day only.

This project will result in many improvements:

- Build northbound and southbound HOV lanes on I-5. The HOV lanes will remain closed until projects to the north are completed across the Puyallup River.
- Install on-ramp meters to maximize highway traffic flow.
- Resurface northbound and southbound I-5.
- Build new McKinley Way and Pacific Avenue overpasses to accommodate a widened I-5.
- Widen shoulders, improve ramp alignments and curves.
- Improve lighting, stormwater collection and treatment.
- Install new high performance barrier.
- Install traffic cameras and highway advisory radio capacity.
- Improve electronic signage for traveler notification.
- Install traffic data collectors. WSDOT uses the data to provide traffic information to the public.



The aerial photo above shows I-5 when the project began in 2014. The Pacific Avenue overpass has since been demolished. Once rebuilt and reopened, crews will demolish and rebuild the McKinley Way overpass.

What can drivers and transit expect?

- Lengthy closure of the McKinley Way overpass.
- Weeknight and weekend lane and ramp closures.
- Periodic night detours for highway on-ramps and exits.
- Lane shifts and roadway restriping as crews create space for construction zones and additional lanes.
- High-impact weekends where traffic will see reduced lanes for construction activities.

What can the local community expect?

- Long-term detours around McKinley Way at I-5.
- Day, night, and weekend work, mainly on I-5 lanes and ramps.
- Construction noise during the day and night from trucks, tractors, paving equipment, back-up alarms required for safety.



This artist's rendering shows I-5 in 2018 when WSDOT finishes the project. New northbound I-5 lanes are shown on the right. Current northbound I-5 lanes are converted to northbound and southbound HOV lanes that will open later when projects to the north are completed.

What are HOV lanes?

HOV lanes are high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, also known as carpool or diamond lanes. HOV lanes are identified by signs along the road and diamonds on the pavement. To use HOV lanes, most vehicles must carry at least two people. Public buses, motorcycles and emergency vehicles may use HOV lanes regardless of the number of occupants. The new HOV lanes on I-5 in Tacoma will open after an adjacent project at the Puyallup River bridge is complete.

Where can I get more information?

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