

Las Vegas Sun

Transportation:

I-15 construction coming to a close early

Officials say streamlined design-build process led to finishing 10 months earlier than projected

By [Kyle Hansen](#) ([contact](#))

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Consider it a Christmas gift — major construction on Interstate 15 north of the Spaghetti Bowl will be finished and all lanes and ramps will be open on Christmas Eve.

When ramps to and from Lake Mead Boulevard open Thursday, construction on the freeway will essentially be completed, and 10 months ahead of schedule, the Nevada Department of Transportation and project contractors announced on Tuesday.

The \$240 million project to widen I-15 from the Spaghetti Bowl to Craig Road began Sept. 7, 2007, and wasn't scheduled for completion until next fall.

The early completion is a result of the project being the first design-build project in the state, said Joseph Schroeder, the project manager for North Corridor Constructors, a joint venture of contractors Las Vegas Paving and CH2M Hill.

In a design-build project, the design and building phases are completed at the same time, rather than the traditional process of waiting until the design is completely finished before beginning construction.

“We were able to shorten that further simply through the really good relationships that existed between the Nevada DOT and North Corridor Constructors and an openness and a willingness to innovate,” Schroeder said.

That innovation included new ways of managing traffic during construction and new construction methods, Schroeder said.

Transportation department officials said cooperation from motorists also was essential.

“Much of the credit for the early completion goes to the motorists who drive I-15 regularly,” said Mary Martini, the district engineer for the area that includes Las Vegas. “Those who found personal alternate routes to avoid the congestion made our construction efforts more productive, allowing the project to be completed well ahead of schedule.”

In addition to an early completion, Schroeder said, the contractors were pleased with the project's safety record for workers and motorists.

The Nevada Contractors Association recently named North Corridor Constructors the safest contractor of the year.

“On the heels of some of the really sad experiences that have happened in this valley over the past few years with construction accidents and so on, hopefully it’s something that everybody in the valley can be proud of,” Schroeder said.

While the major work on the project is done, there is still some minor work to be finished in the coming months, mainly landscaping and painting, Schroeder said.

And in the spring, crews will return for three or four weeks to lay down a final layer of asphalt from the Spaghetti Bowl to Carey Avenue.

That work has to wait until warmer weather, when temperatures are at least 70 degrees at night. “Mother Nature won’t let us finish that (now),” Schroeder said.

The remaining paving shouldn’t be much of a hassle for motorists since it will be at night, officials said.

“It will be pretty quick, nothing major about it,” Schroeder said. “Very, very minor in comparison with what we’ve been dealing with for the last year and a half or so.”

The success of this project has encouraged the Department of Transportation to use the design-build process again, next for the \$246 million [Interstate 15 South project](#), which will widen the road from Tropicana Avenue to Silverado Rancho Boulevard, south of Blue Diamond Road.

That project is scheduled to begin in February or March, NDOT spokesman Bob Mckenzie said.

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