



## IN THIS ISSUE

**November 2011**

**I-35 ROAD CONDITIONS NOW AVAILABLE AT MY35.ORG**

**ON THE ROAD AGAIN: TXDOT COURTESY PATROLS READY TO HELP**

**THE PRESERVATION PRINCIPLE: TXDOT AND THE TEXAS ECOLOGY**

## **I-35 ROAD CONDITIONS NOW AVAILABLE AT MY35.ORG**

Planning a trip? Check out the **Road Conditions** page on **My35.org**.

The page shows current and upcoming conditions, including lane closures, as the I-35 Expansion Project progresses. Traffic cameras from Austin and San Antonio are also available, showing you the closest thing to real-time traffic conditions available. (Images are updated every 2 seconds.)

TxDOT can help you plan your trip. All it takes is a mouse click!

## **ON THE ROAD AGAIN: TXDOT COURTESY PATROLS READY TO HELP**

Texas Department of Transportation maintenance technicians will once again be riding to the rescue of drivers with vehicle problems along I-35 this Thanksgiving holiday.

As part of the Waco District's annual Roadside Assistance Courtesy Patrol, two TxDOT pickup trucks in each of three counties — Hill, McLennan, and Bell — with two technicians on board each one, will drive the highway in both directions on Wednesday, Nov. 23, and Sunday, Nov. 27, from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. both days.

Equipped with a wide assortment of tools and supplies, the technicians will look for vehicles on the side of the road and stop to offer assistance with any minor problem, like changing flat tires, jumping dead batteries, fueling empty gas tanks, etc.

On the heaviest travel days of the year, TxDOT hopes this extra level of service will help drivers and their passengers arrive at family celebrations safely and on time.



## CALENDAR

**Nov. 28 - 30**

### **Intermittent Lane Closures from Salado to Belton**

For details, see the Central: Lane Closures update for this section of I-35 in this issue.

**Dec. - Jan. 2012**

### **Future Business Community Meetings**

Details closer to the dates.

**Jan. 2012**

### **Groundbreaking for 3 New Projects (dates TBA)**

Section 1B: Salado (FM 2268 to FM 2484)

Section 3A-1: Temple to Troy (N. Loop 363 to N. Troy City Limit)

Section 3B: Lorena to Hewitt (Woodlawn Rd. to Sun Valley Blvd./FM 2063)

## LINKS

[I-35 Road Conditions](#)

[My35.org](#)

[TxDOT](#)

## CONTACT

### **Jodi Wheatley**

I-35 Information Specialist  
TxDOT Waco District  
100 S. Loop Dr.  
Waco, TX 76704  
254/867-2836  
[jodi.wheatley@txdot.gov](mailto:jodi.wheatley@txdot.gov)

## THE PRESERVATION PRINCIPLE: TXDOT AND THE TEXAS ECOLOGY

In the near future, a rare salamander could be added to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's endangered species list. *Eurycea chisholmensis*, or Salado Springs Salamander, lives in only one place in the world — Salado Creek in Bell County, Texas.

As part of the larger I-35 Expansion Project through Salado (slated to begin in early 2012), the Salado Creek bridge expansion has the potential to disrupt the salamander's sensitive habitat. So TxDOT will implement special care during construction to minimize the impact to the creek and its 2-inch resident. When drilling into the rock formations below the creek bed, for example, the agency will require that special casings be used to avoid polluting the underground spring system.

### **I. Preservation is the Guiding Principle**

Salamanders are just one example of how TxDOT Environmental Coordinator Mike Rhodes and his team prioritize protecting Texas' ecological resources. When it comes to the ecology, TxDOT takes direction from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, which seeks to avoid "potential impacts to the social and natural environment when considering approval of proposed transportation projects."

Under the NEPA umbrella, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act focus on specific areas for preservation.

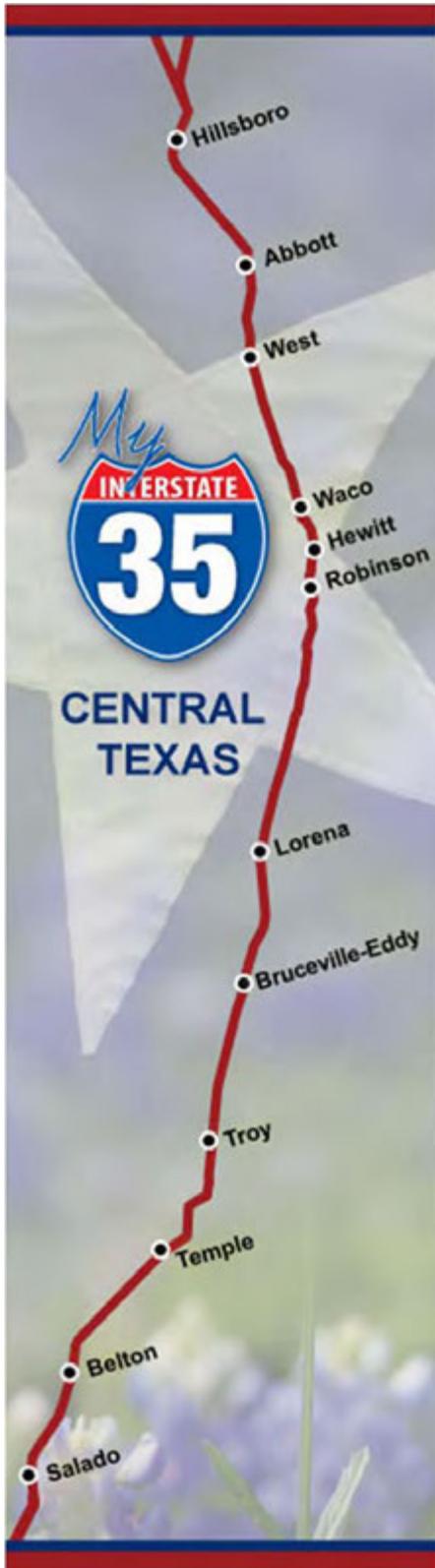
"The first step in following NEPA occurs long before construction," Rhodes points out. "For example, when we begin an ecological investigation, we first identify any of the species along our planned construction route that are on either the state's protected list or the U.S. endangered list."

For instance, in addition to the Salado Creek Salamander, two protected species of freshwater mollusks — the Smooth Pimpleback and the Texas Fawnsfoot — inhabit waterways along I-35. TxDOT recently engaged a team of biologists to search the streams and rivers along the interstate and look for potential ecological conflicts. Had these populations been found near the construction zones, TxDOT might have had to relocate them.

### **II. Birds of All Feathers**

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act protects thousands of species of birds in Texas including Cliff and Barn swallows, which tend to build their nests on highway bridge overhangs.

"As a result, we take special steps with the construction and demolition of



TxDOT bridges — a prime nesting and roosting location for the swallows,” says Rhodes.

One of those steps is to prohibit the demolition of bridges from February 1 to September 1 if they’re being used by birds for nesting. If the demolition work must take place during the nesting season, however, TxDOT contractors can use preventative measures, like special repellent gels and netting, to keep birds out of the danger zone.

“We also go out of our way to make sure bats are not harmed by our work,” Rhodes explains. “For the new bridges over Salado Creek and the Lampasas River, we are planning to install man-made bat houses.” Currently, bats are roosting in the gaps between bridge segments. However, the new bridges will be built as single-piece structures, thus denying them their traditional roosting sites.

“Bats nationwide are declining because of a disease known as white-nose syndrome,” Rhodes explains, “so we are doing what we can to support the local populations.”

So, why go to all this trouble for bats? Turns out, bats are extremely important to balancing the Lone Star State’s ecological system. They help control insect populations, and when insects get out of control, they can eat up farmers’ crops. That harms local farmers, the state economy, and the environment in general. So, one small bat can make a big difference.

“Building the alternative for the bats is simply the right thing to do,” Rhodes says.

Though the bats are important, TxDOT takes other precautions to protect a wide range of wildlife. For example, areas along waterways lined with vegetation are called *riparian corridors*: prime locations for all animals because they provide food, shelter and sometimes breeding habitats. Rhodes says TxDOT minimizes the clearing done in order to preserve these important habitats.

### III. Water: Lifeblood of the Environment

Whenever construction takes place near a river, stream or other waterway, TxDOT does everything it can to minimize runoff. “Sediment is considered a pollutant,” Rhodes points out. “Preventing soil erosion is a big effort for I-35 and all our projects.” Numerous strategies are used: silt fences, rock berms, erosion blankets; TxDOT even plants native grasses in order to prevent sediment from entering creeks and rivers.

“Protecting the ecosystems is a lot more than just our concern for one species of salamander,” Rhodes says. “We make it our mission to act in an environmentally responsible manner in everything we do. After all, TxDOT’s policy is *to preserve and enhance the environment*. By taking the extra steps, we know we’re protecting all living things — and meeting

the travel needs for Texans at the same time.”

## LANE CLOSURES

### SECTION 1C: SALADO TO BELTON (FM 2484 TO US 190/FM 436)

Bell County will have a number of closures after Thanksgiving. These mainlane closures will involve detouring traffic to the frontage roads. Local law enforcement, message boards, and advance signage will be in place. | [Access this section's project map \(schematic\).](#)

Begin Closure Time	End Closure Time	Description
Monday, November 28, 7 p.m.	Tuesday, November 29, 7 a.m.	The mainlanes (both directions) on I-35 will be closed at Amity Rd. to allow the contractor to set the beams across I-35 for the Amity crossover bridge.
Tuesday, November 29, 7 p.m.	Wednesday, November 30, 7 a.m.	The eastbound mainlanes on US 190 will be closed from Connell St to I-35 to allow the contractor to set the steel girders across US 190 for the US 190 westbound flyover.
Wednesday, November 30, 7 p.m.	Thursday, December 1, 7 a.m.	
Wednesday, November 30, 7 p.m.	Thursday, December 1, 7 a.m.	The mainlanes (both directions) on I-35 will be closed at Tahuaya Rd. to allow the contractor to set the beams across IH 35 for the Tahuaya Rd. crossover bridge.

### SECTION 5A: WACO TO WEST (N. LOOP 340 TO FM 1858)

- Wiggins Rd. crossing over I-35 (exit 349) will be closed beginning Monday, Nov. 28, 2011, for 12 to 18 months as it is being demolished and rebuilt.
- I-35 northbound Exit 342B will be closed for 3 to 6 months as work progresses at the US 77/I-35 interchange. Exit 342A (Crest Dr./FM 2417) will be open.
- Southbound entrance ramp from BUS 77 onto I-35 is closed for approximately two months.

### SECTION 5B: WEST TO ABBOTT (FM 1858/TOKIO RD. TO FM 1304)

- The southbound frontage road will be closed from Marable St. toward FM 2114/Oak St. (approximately 0.2 miles) for construction from Monday, November 28, 8 a.m., until sometime

on Wednesday, November 30.

## **SECTION 5C: ABBOTT TO SOUTH OF HILLSBORO (FM 1304 TO FM 310)**

- FM 310 is partially closed (one lane in each direction) under the I-35 overpass while the cross-street is rebuilt and turnarounds added.
- Exit 362 to Chatt Rd. is closed until new exit and entrance ramps are constructed. Traffic will use Exit 359 (FM 1304) northbound and Exit 364 (FM 310) southbound to access Chatt Rd. during the closure.

### **MILESTONES**

## **SECTION 1C: SALADO TO BELTON (FM 2484 TO US 190/FM 436)**

Started work on the:

- Center support columns at the crossover overpasses.
- Southbound frontage road from US 190 to Loop 121.
- Abutments for the northbound frontage road bridge at the Lampasas River.
- Intersection approaches at the crossover bridges.

**Access this section's project map (schematic).**

## **SECTION 3C: HEWITT TO WACO (FM 2063/SUN VALLEY BLVD. TO S. LOOP 340)**

- Finished the northbound concrete pavement and construction of the large sign structure columns.
- Switched northbound traffic to the new pavement between Corporation Dr. and N. Loop 340.
- Began placing the permanent centerline barrier wall.

## **SECTION 5A: WACO TO WEST (N. LOOP 340 TO FM 1858/TOKIO RD.)**

- Switched southbound frontage road traffic onto the new pavement, Crest Dr. to Craven Ave.
- Switched northbound frontage road traffic onto the new pavement from N. Loop 340 to Meyers Ln., and at the newly constructed Pecan Ave. crossing.

## **SECTION 5B: WEST TO ABBOTT (FM 1858/TOKIO RD. TO FM 1304)**

- Completed placing box culverts on Marable St. crossing and started installing them at other locations.
- Began placing concrete traffic barrier along the mainlanes for the frontage road work.
- Various utilities companies have begun relocating lines.
- Began excavating and placing embankment for the Marable St. crossing.

**Access this section's project map (schematic).**

## **SECTION 5C: ABBOTT TO HILLSBORO (FM 1304 TO FM 310)**

- Completed construction of (and placement of pavement markings for) the southbound frontage road.

## **HILL COUNTY SAFETY REST AREAS**

- Completed majority of excavation and began construction of embankment for roads.
- Began construction of southbound-side building pad.

## **DOWN THE ROAD**

## **SECTION 1C: SALADO TO BELTON (FM 2484 TO US 190/FM 436)**

- Begin setting the beams on the crossover support columns.
- Begin setting steel girders on the US 190 westbound flyover.
- Begin placing asphalt on the I-35 northbound frontage road from FM 2484 to Amity Rd.

**Access this section's project map (schematic).**

## **SECTION 3C: HEWITT TO WACO (FM 2063/SUN VALLEY BOULEVARD TO S. LOOP 340)**

- Finish setting the metal rails on the flyover.
- Finish small portions of roadway (guard fence, etc.).
- Begin setting trusses on the large sign structures.
- Finish landscaping and irrigation and placing the permanent centerline barrier wall.
- Begin setting illumination poles.

- Open northbound I-35 to westbound N. Loop 340 flyover and shift southbound mainlane traffic to final configuration.

## **SECTION 5A: WACO TO WEST (N. LOOP 340 TO FM 1858/TOKIO RD.)**

- Continue construction of the frontage roads from N. Loop 340 to Hilltop Rd. and the northbound mainlanes at BUS 77.
- Continue construction of FM 1858/Tokio Rd. and Hilltop Rd. overpasses, as well as the UPRR bridge.
- Continue construction of the northbound frontage road from Tours Rd. to FM 1858/Tokio Rd.
- Continue construction of ramps from N. Loop 340 to BUS 77.
- Shift traffic to permanent frontage road pavement between N. Loop 340 and BUS 77.

## **SECTION 5B: WEST TO ABBOTT (FM 1858/TOKIO RD. TO FM 1304)**

- Begin work on the frontage roads and box culverts.
- Continue with utility relocation and installing a concrete traffic barrier on the mainlanes and frontage roads.

**Access this section's project map (schematic).**

## **SECTION 5C: ABBOTT TO HILLSBORO (FM 1304 TO FM 310)**

- Open southbound access road to two-lane traffic.
- Open the u-turn lanes at FM 1304 and Chatt Rd.
- Continue working on the northbound mainlane shoulders and ramps and begin work on the southbound main lane shoulders and ramps.
- Finish widening the mainlane for Cobb Creek bridge.
- Move traffic to the outside northbound mainlanes at FM 310 and begin repairing the inside lanes.
- Finish the final lanes at FM 310 crossing.
- Continue placing asphalt on the northbound frontage road.
- Continue seeding the project and upgrading erosion control devices.

## **HILL COUNTY SAFETY REST AREAS**

- Complete excavation of sites.
- Continue construction of embankment for roads and southbound-side building pad.
- Complete leveling of southbound-side site and begin leveling northbound-side site.
- Prepare to pour slab for southbound rest area.

**For more information or to have your email address added to the I-35 information distribution list,  
please send your request to [Jodi.Wheatley@txdot.gov](mailto:Jodi.Wheatley@txdot.gov).**

Texas Transportation Institute | 2929 Research Parkway | College Station, TX 77843 | United States