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To: [Undisclosed recipients:](#)
Subject: WSDOT News Correction: Major lane closures on westbound I-90 just one week away; Drivers can help keep traffic moving
Date: Thursday, July 10, 2014 1:21:15 PM
Importance: High

Washington State Department of Transportation – NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 10, 2014

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Correction: Please note change in the fourth bullet under “Closure details at a glance.” The sentence should read “...the east entrance to the center roadway.”

Major lane closures on westbound I-90 just one week away; Drivers can help keep traffic moving

Up to three lanes closed around the clock for seven days beginning July 18

MERCER ISLAND – Drivers have a little more than one week left to make plans for seven days of major lane closures along westbound Interstate 90 between Bellevue and Mercer Island.

Beginning Friday, July 18, up to three westbound lanes on the interstate will be closed around the clock while contractor crews working for the Washington State Department of Transportation replace two aging and deteriorating 92-foot-long bridge expansion joints on the East Channel Bridge.

The lane closures will affect traffic on many of the Eastside’s key commute corridors including I-405 and State Route 520. WSDOT urges drivers to make alternate plans such as carpooling, vanpooling, telecommuting, using an alternate route, or adjusting their schedule to take advantage of off-peak travel times.

Traffic engineers estimate the best times to travel will be before 6 a.m., between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. and after 7 p.m. Engineers estimate more than half of the 85,000 drivers that use westbound I-90 each day will need to use another route or an alternate travel mode to keep travel times at one hour or less from Issaquah to Seattle.

“We need drivers to change the way they commute for seven days so that WSDOT can complete this important safety work,” said WSDOT Traffic Engineer Mark Bandy. “We will see backups from this work, but if enough drivers do their part we can keep them manageable.”

Closure details at a glance

- Westbound I-90 will be reduced to one through lane near Bellevue Way from 9:30 p.m. Friday, July 18 to 5 a.m. Friday, July 25.

- Three lanes of westbound I-90 will be open at the Bellevue Way interchange as the ramps from Bellevue Way and I-405 join mainline I-90.
- Complete lane closure information and [animated maps](#) are available on the [project website](#).
- The westbound I-90 HOV lane will be open to all between I-405 and the east entrance to the center roadway.

The I-90 center roadway

The center roadway will operate on its [normal schedule](#). The entrance near East Mercer Way will remain open only to HOV vehicles when the lanes are in the westbound direction. The entrance to the center roadway is after the construction zone so changing the express lanes operation will not help westbound I-90 drivers get past the work.

Driver tips

Travelers who use westbound I-90 should consider the following:

- Choose an alternative travel mode such as [car or vanpooling](#), public transportation, walking or cycling.
- Set up a [short term Good To Go!](#) account to use westbound SR 520 during the work.
- Consider telecommuting.
- Drivers heading westbound into Bellevue may want to consider exiting early and using surface streets to reach their destinations.
- Allow plenty of extra time and expect additional congestion on alternate routes including SR 520 and surface streets.
- Use westbound I-90 early in the morning or late at night.
- Delay or reschedule discretionary trips.

Know before you go and have a backup plan

Those who must drive are encouraged to stay engaged and check traffic conditions frequently via WSDOT's web, mobile and phone based traveler information systems.

- The [Seattle traffic page](#) contains updated road information including links to traffic cameras.
- [The travel alerts](#) website provides real-time information about blocking incidents.
- WSDOT's [mobile app](#) offers information for travelers on the go.
- [@wsdot_traffic](#) provides Twitter updates about travel issues.
- 5-1-1 offers traffic updates.
- The [What's Happening Now](#) page chronicles closures and issues affecting travelers.

Special events

Drivers should also be aware of several special events in the Seattle area occurring during the closure that could cause additional congestion:

- The Bite of Seattle takes place at the Seattle Center July 18-20.
- The Seattle Sounders have a match against the Tottenham Hotspur on Saturday, July 19 at CenturyLink Field
- The Seattle Mariners begin a 7 game home stand on Monday, July 21 against the New York Mets and the Baltimore Orioles.

“There is never a good time to do a closure like this because someone is always going to be

inconvenienced,” said WSDOT Regional Administrator Lorena Eng. “However this is vital highway preservation and safety work.”

Expansion joints play a critical role in how a bridge functions. They allow sections of a bridge to expand and contract with changing temperatures and traffic. Failing expansion joints are a safety hazard to drivers and can cause a bridge to bend, crack or even collapse. WSDOT maintenance crews have made several emergency fixes to the expansion joints on the East Channel Bridge but a permanent fix is needed.

During the closure, the crews will chip the concrete away from the two existing expansion joints on each end of the bridge. The joints, which are 33-years-old and have cracks and broken seals where water is leaking into them, will be lifted out. The new expansion joints are each 92-feet-long with a combined weight of more than 29 tons. A large crane will be used to lift the joints into place, and contractor crews will secure the joints and pour new concrete around them.

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Hyperlinks within the release:

- Animated maps: www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/I90/wbEastChnlBrdgExpJointRpr/Animation.htm
- Project website: www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/i90/wbeastchnlbrdgexpjointpr/
- Normal schedule: www.wsdot.wa.gov/Northwest/King/ExpressLanes
- Car or vanpooling: www.wsdot.wa.gov/Choices/rideshare.htm
- Short term *Good to Go!* www.wsdot.wa.gov/GoodToGo/FormsAccountFees.htm
- Seattle traffic page: www.wsdot.com/traffic/seattle/default.aspx
- Travel alerts: www.wsdot.com/traffic/trafficalerts/default.aspx
- Mobile app: www.wsdot.com/Inform/mobile.htm
- @wsdot_traffic: twitter.com/wsdot_traffic
- What’s Happening Now: www.wsdot.wa.gov/construction/pugetsound/today.htm

WSDOT keeps people, businesses and the economy moving by operating and improving the state's transportation systems. To learn more about what we're doing, go to www.wsdot.wa.gov/news for pictures, videos, news and blogs. Real time traffic information is available at www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic or by dialing 511.

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