



The westbound lanes of State Road 84 and the I-595 on-ramp will shift on Sunday and will run under the upper portion of the braided ramp at right while I-595 is widened. (Amy Beth Bennett, Sun Sentinel / June 27, 2011)

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### Long-term I-595 ramp closures start in July

Each closing for construction will last weeks to months

By [Michael Turnbell](#), Sun Sentinel

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If you drive Interstate 595, get ready for detours and delays.

A series of long-term ramp closures — each lasting anywhere from 20 days to almost seven months — begins next month, and continues over the next three years.

That means many of the 180,000 commuters who travel Broward's only east-west expressway between University Drive and Interstate 75 will be spilling into neighboring streets, backing up at intersections, and adding time and frustration to their daily drives.

At 10 p.m. July 5, the westbound exit to Nob Hill Road and the westbound entrance from State Road 84 west of Pine Island Road will close around the clock for 4-1/2 months.

The ramps must be closed so crews can finish a new "braided" ramp that will carry the exit to Nob Hill on a bridge over the entrance ramp from S.R. 84.

This fall, the eastbound ramps between Nob Hill and Pine Island roads will close for 212 days

and the northbound University Drive ramp to westbound I-595 will be shut for 20 days.

If there's one bright spot it's this: No long-term ramp closures are planned on I-595 ramps east of University Drive, including the interchange with Florida's Turnpike.

What the Florida Department of Transportation calls the state's largest ever highway project — stretching 13 miles on I-595 from I-75 to east of State Road 7 plus the turnpike's approaches to I-595 — is now moving into its second year of construction.

Officials say the \$1.8 billion makeover is on schedule for completion in March 2014.

Already, drivers can see the beginnings of the reversible express lanes sprouting in the median west of Pine Island and the pilings for ramps that will connect the express lanes to Florida's Turnpike. They also can watch the first braided entrance and exit ramps being built to keep traffic exiting I-595 from crossing paths with traffic entering the highway.

During the ramp closures that start in July, westbound I-595 drivers bound for Nob Hill will be able to exit at Pine Island and continue west on S.R. 84 to Nob Hill. Or they can exit at Hiatus Road, make a U-turn under the I-595 overpass and continue on eastbound S.R. 84 to Nob Hill.

Drivers from Pine Island who want to go west on I-595 will be able to use the on-ramp just west of Nob Hill.

"Wow, till November?" said John Sternal, who takes the Nob Hill exit regularly on his way home. "That's a big inconvenience. Pine Island is not good because there are too many lights. I'd rather go up to Hiatus and then loop around via Broward Boulevard."

The contractor plans to work with [Broward County](#) traffic engineers to adjust signals at intersections that may handle more traffic while the ramps are closed.

"It won't just be at intersections along 595 and 84 because we realize that traffic radiates out. We'll be looking downstream at intersections at Broward Boulevard and monitoring and adjusting those signals as well," said Melanie Sexton, a project spokeswoman.

Four-and-a-half months sounds like a long time, but the contractor has an incentive to open the new ramps sooner.

The contractor, I-595 Express, headed by Spanish construction giant ACS Infrastructure Development, can pocket a \$4 million bonus if workers complete the ramps by Sept. 28.

"It's not all or nothing," said Sexton. "If they finish on the actual date (Sept. 28), they get 100 percent. However if they open late, the bonus is prorated on a per-day amount."

There also are penalties up to \$1 million a day if the contractor doesn't finish in the allotted time for each closure.

Many commuters give the contractor good marks and say they are pleasantly surprised that driving through the construction hasn't been as bad as feared — so far. In the end, they hope the delays and pain they are experiencing now will be worth it when the new I-595 opens in 2014.

"You never know. Build a highway and they will come," said Harry Rucco, of Weston, who drives I-595 five days a week. "I remember when there was nothing to get out here. If you were making a trip from Plantation to Bonaventure you had to pack a lunch to get there. But what are you going to do? It is what it is."

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