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Westbound I-595 work schedule changed, some work to be finished a year sooner

By [Michael Turnbull](#), Sun Sentinel

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Major changes should make heading west on Interstate 595 a lot smoother, a lot sooner than expected.

It'll be a lot easier to merge onto northbound Florida's Turnpike.

A new elevated ramp system will put some exit ramps on bridges over on-ramps. No more fighting with cars entering the highway while you're trying to exit and vice-versa.

And the missing link of S.R. 84 will be completed.

There's a small catch: You'll have to endure some pain a little longer in exchange for a bigger reward by the end of the year.

Some new ramps that were touted as opening as early as September 28 will now open a little later.

That means the Nob Hill Road exit, which looked like it would open at the end of this month, won't. It will stay closed until mid-November.

But another major improvement that wasn't supposed to be finished until the end of 2012 – the completion of westbound S.R. 84 – has been pushed up by a year. Now it should be finished in December.

By building S.R. 84 to carry some of the congestion burden, officials say I-595 will gain extra capacity and should flow much smoother.

Drivers like Thomas Hardt of Fort Lauderdale, would rather stay on S.R. 84 and not be forced to enter I-595 as they are now.

"Tanker trucks loaded with fuel are flying by me on I-595," said Hardt, who commutes to Plantation. "It's crazy."

When I-595 was built in the 1980s, S.R. 84 was eliminated in both directions between S.R. 7 and Davie Road. Today, drivers on S.R. 84 piggyback on I-595 for about a mile.

Here's why westbound I-595 becomes gridlocked almost every day: A car headed west on I-595 to Davie Road must fight its way past traffic entering the interstate from S.R. 84, northbound S.R. 7, southbound S.R. 7 and the turnpike – all within a half mile - to get to the Davie exit. You have to deal with a constant weaving barrage of traffic entering the highway and trying to make the next exit.

But the \$1.8 billion reconstruction of I-595 is rolling forward at a breakneck pace, with nearly \$30 million a month being spent on road work and more than 2,300 workers on the job. By shifting priorities, westbound drivers will see a bigger benefit much sooner, said Paul Lampley, a project manager for the Florida Department of Transportation.

Once it opens in December, the new westbound S.R. 84 will function as an expressway just like the lanes that run along I-95 between Broward Boulevard and I-595. The new S.R. 84 will collect I-595 drivers headed to S.R. 7 and the turnpike and S.R. 7 drivers headed to I-595, keeping them separate from longer-distance commuters on I-595.

By reducing the number of entry points and spacing on-ramps further apart, westbound I-595 drivers will be able to travel from I-95 all the way to west of the turnpike before the first traffic enters the highway.

Other changes:

The tricky interchange between westbound I-595 and the northbound turnpike has been plagued with crashes, including one in 2005 involving a gasoline tanker that overturned onto an adjacent car and exploded, killing four people.

That's getting replaced by a much more direct ramp that's as simple as turning your wheel to the right. It should open sometime between the end of the month and mid-October.

Also, drivers on S.R. 7 who want to go west on I-595 will stay on S.R. 84 until they get west of Davie Road, then merge onto the interstate under a new elevated exit ramp to University Drive.

The changes on westbound I-595 will happen in stages, starting in the next few weeks when the new ramp to the northbound turnpike opens.

The new elevated or "braided" ramp between Davie Road and University Drive is set to open by the end of October. It is the first of five braided ramp systems – two westbound and four eastbound - that will open on I-595 over the next three years.

The other westbound elevated ramp between Pine Island Road and Nob Hill Road should open before Thanksgiving. It will take traffic exiting to Nob Hill over drivers entering I-595 from S.R. 84 west of Pine Island.

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