



NEWSLETTER
SUMMER 2001

INSIDE:

Heading South

Reaching the half-way point, workers move to the other side

Open and Shut

Downtown Expressway ramps are affected

What's Next

Four bridges are next in line

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Construction on the I-95 James River Bridge is going smoothly. Although work will most likely continue beyond the original fall deadline, the number of nights traffic is affected by the project should not increase.

“The schedule changes won’t really affect motorists,” said Mike Schwartz, VDOT Project Engineer. “Construction crews are scheduled to restrict traffic to one lane in each direction for only 179 nights. Those nights will just be spread out over a longer period of time.”

Project Timeline Extended

No Additional Effect on Traffic



Photo by: Trevor Wrayton, VDOT

The contractor anticipates to finish the deck replacement by Christmas. Construction could go past this year and into next spring’s construction season depending on the weather and other unforeseen circumstances. VDOT had estimated the project would be completed by fall of this year, but several things are causing the completion date to be extended.

The I-95 James River Bridge was built in the 1950’s and has endured more traffic than it was built to carry. The excessive use has taken its toll on the surface and the pieces beneath. As segments were prepared for removal, additional problems with the bridge were found that needed attention – causing construction delays.

“A good analogy would be if you bought a 50-year old home that had carpet that needed replacing,” said Schwartz. “But when you pulled the carpet up, you found some of the floorboards had water damage and needed to be replaced too. We’ve inspected every inch of the bridge that’s visible, but sometimes when you begin to replace pieces you find problems that could not have been predicted.”

Crews will work through the rest of the year, taking a break when necessary for winter weather. After the deck is replaced, periodic lane closures will be necessary for crews to complete miscellaneous work.

Once the restoration work is completed, the bridge will be safer and stronger. The new driving surface will extend the life of the bridge by fifty years.

Halfway Done

Crews move to Southbound Side

Work on the home stretch has begun. Construction crews working on the I-95 James River Bridge have completed the restoration of the northbound side of the bridge and have moved to the southbound side.

Construction began in May 2000, resulting in lane closures for about 80 nights. During that time, construction crews have developed a routine for the removal and replacement of the bridge segments. The contractor is allowed to keep lanes closed until 6 a.m., but work is usually completed long before that.

"This can be an extremely difficult and tedious construction method," said Tamara Neale, VDOT Media Relations Manager. "We greatly appreciate the patience of motorists traveling the bridge during construction. Overall, we have had great success in replacing segments during the night hours."

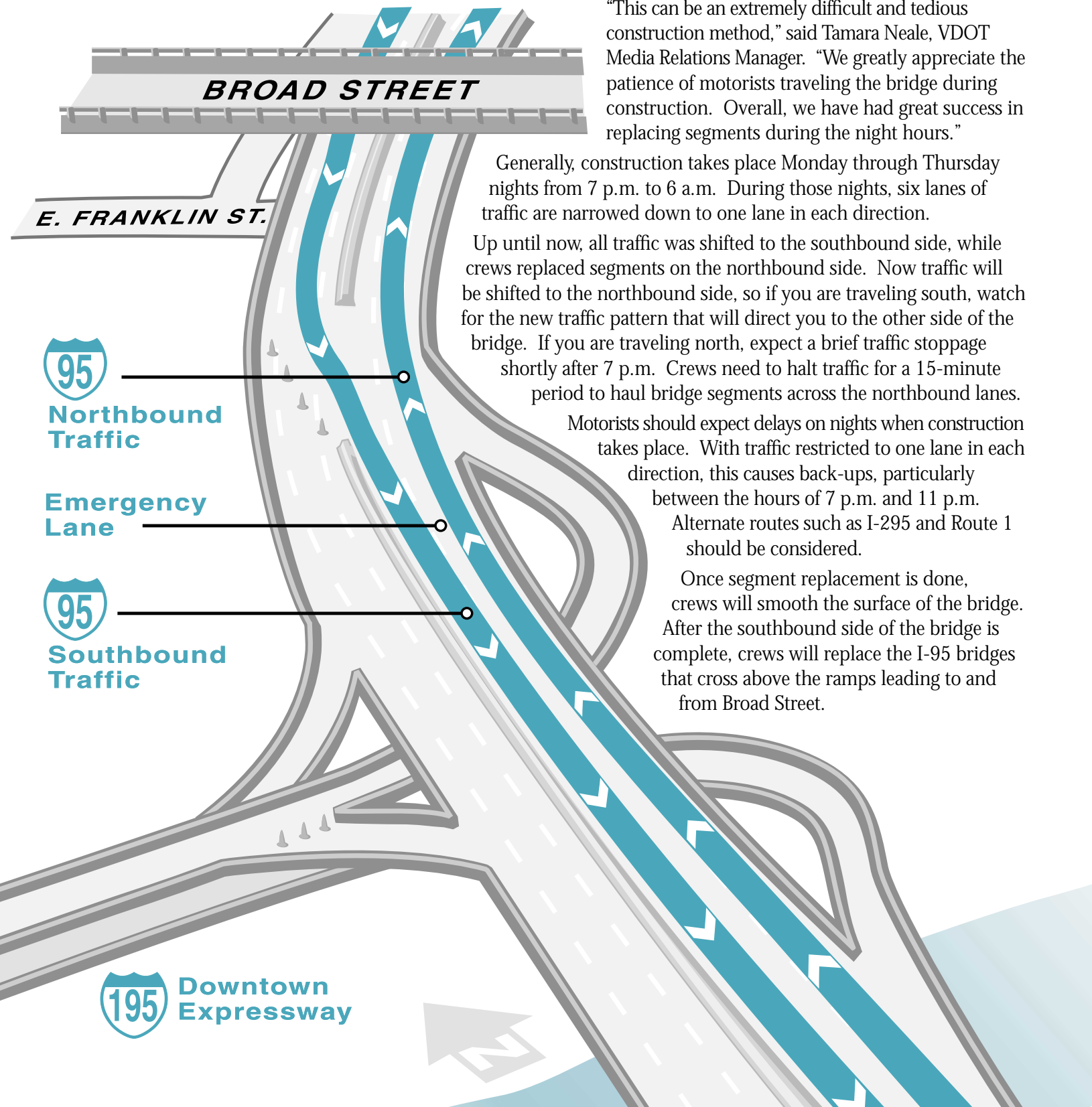
Generally, construction takes place Monday through Thursday nights from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. During those nights, six lanes of traffic are narrowed down to one lane in each direction.

Up until now, all traffic was shifted to the southbound side, while crews replaced segments on the northbound side. Now traffic will be shifted to the northbound side, so if you are traveling south, watch for the new traffic pattern that will direct you to the other side of the bridge. If you are traveling north, expect a brief traffic stoppage shortly after 7 p.m. Crews need to halt traffic for a 15-minute period to haul bridge segments across the northbound lanes.

Motorists should expect delays on nights when construction takes place. With traffic restricted to one lane in each direction, this causes back-ups, particularly between the hours of 7 p.m. and 11 p.m.

Alternate routes such as I-295 and Route 1 should be considered.

Once segment replacement is done, crews will smooth the surface of the bridge. After the southbound side of the bridge is complete, crews will replace the I-95 bridges that cross above the ramps leading to and from Broad Street.



Phase 2 in Planning Stage

Four Bridges Next in Line

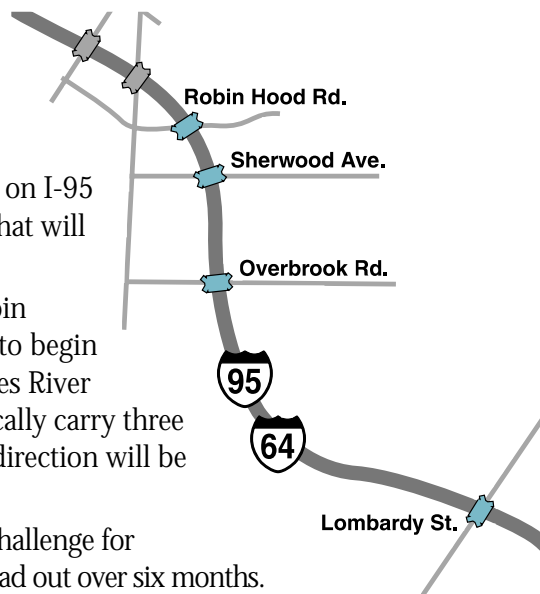
When the I-95 James River Bridge is complete, construction crews will head north on I-95 to begin work on other smaller bridges. There are almost a dozen other bridges that will be replaced, but the four closest bridges will get attention first.

The bridges above Lombardy Street, Sherwood Avenue, Overbrook Road and Robin Hood Road make up the next group of bridges. Work on this phase is expected to begin in spring 2003. All of the bridges will be restored in the same method as the James River Bridge – by removing and replacing bridge segments at night. Those bridges typically carry three lanes of traffic in each direction. During construction, one lane of traffic in each direction will be available.

The Lombardy Street Bridge also crosses above railroad tracks, which will create a challenge for construction crews. Work on this bridge will take about 99 nights of construction spread out over six months. Construction on the other bridges will go much more quickly, each requiring only a few nights of lane closures.

Although restoration of these bridges will move along much more quickly than the James River Bridge, the impact could be greater. Traffic volumes on this section of I-95 are higher than on the James River Bridge – especially in the early evening. If you use this stretch on I-95 to get home in the evening, you should look for an alternate route once construction begins in 2003.

VDOT will work with the news media to make motorists aware of when construction will cause lane closures. Make sure



New Ramp Closures Begin

Downtown Expressway Drivers Affected

If you use the downtown expressway at night during the week, construction may cause you to take another route. Now that construction on the I-95 James River Bridge has moved to the southbound side of the bridge, access to the ramps leading to and from the expressway will change.

Up until now, crews were working on the northbound side of the bridge, which meant the ramp leading from the expressway to northbound I-95 was closed and drivers had to follow a detour. The ramp leading from I-95 north to the expressway was also closed. Now those ramps are open – allowing expressway users to access I-95 north. But access is restricted elsewhere.

Motorists trying to reach I-95 south from the downtown expressway will not be able to access the normal ramp. They'll need to follow this detour:

- ▶ Exit the expressway at the 7th Street exit
- ▶ Turn left on 7th Street
- ▶ Proceed north to the I-95 south exit

If you normally access the downtown expressway from southbound I-95, that ramp will be closed too. Motorists will need to follow this detour:

- ▶ Take the Broad Street west exit (Route 250)
- ▶ Turn left on Governor Street
- ▶ Turn right on Main Street
- ▶ Turn left on 10th Street
- ▶ Turn right on Canal Street
- ▶ Enter the downtown expressway (Route 195) at 7th Street

These ramp closures will only be in effect while crews are working on the bridge. Lane closures begin at 7 p.m. on Monday through Thursday nights and end at 6 a.m. the next morning. Crews will work occasionally on Sunday nights.

The Early Days



(Top left) Miss Turnpike, Virginia Wicker, christened the opening of the James River Bridge in June 1958 (top right). Just like in 1973 (bottom right), the bridge continues to handle a high volume of traffic today.



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