DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

THE PROJECT

What's happening on Highway 169?

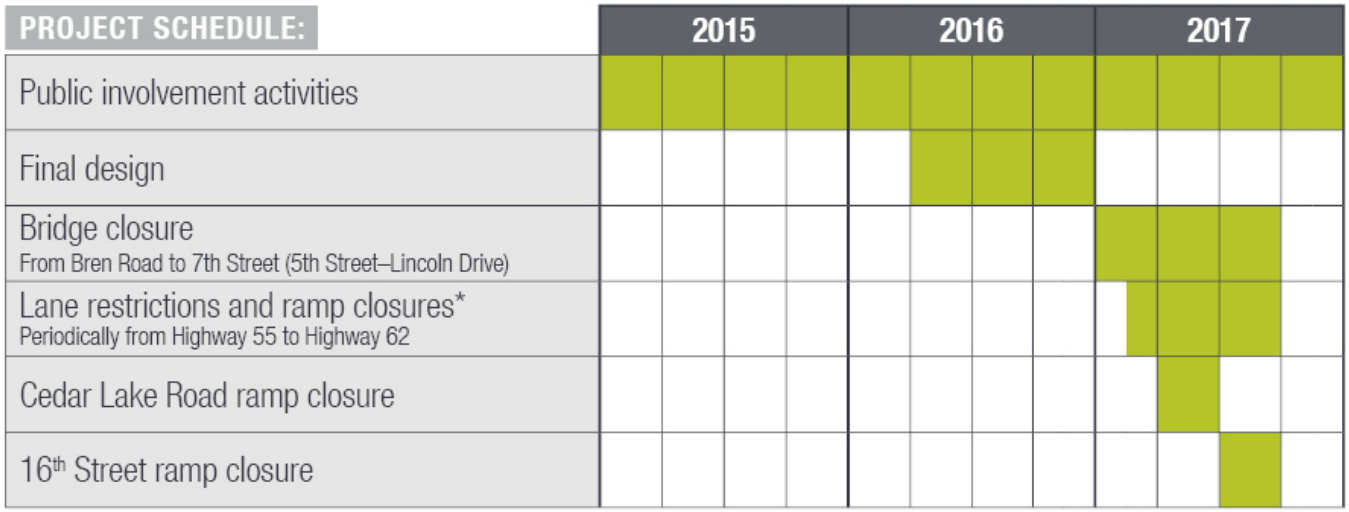
The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is planning to rebuild and repair the infrastructure on Highway 169 between Highway 55 and Highway 62. This will include:

- Closing the southbound exit and entrance ramps on Highway 169 at 16th Street and installing a visual barrier
- Improving the safety of entrance and exit ramps at Cedar Lake Road by lengthening the ramps
- Replacing the Highway 169 bridge between Bren Road and 7th Street (5th Street-Lincoln Drive exit)
- Repairing pavement between Highway 55 and Highway 62
- Repairing noise walls, replacing the concrete barrier, and improving pedestrian accessibility at intersections throughout the corridor

These projects will improve driver safety and accessibility, and provide a smoother road surface and longer lasting bridge once completed.

What is the timeline for the project?

The work is scheduled to start late-January 2017, and is expected to be complete in October 2017, weather permitting.



*Closures will occur consecutively

This is a change from a planned start date of November 2016. Here are a few things to know about this project update:

Knowing the importance of this project to local communities, MnDOT purposefully started outreach early, even before a construction contractor was hired. A wide range of months was used to describe the project timeline (1 year, from Nov. 2016 to Nov. 2017).

A contractor was recently hired, and can complete construction within a shorter timeframe (Jan. 2017 to Oct. 2017). This means the project will be done sooner!

The change is not because Highway 494 and Highway 100 construction projects are delayed or behind schedule. They are still on track to be done in Nov. this year (2016).

Will work on I-494 and Highway 100 be completed by the time construction starts on Highway 169?

Work on Highway 100 will be completed before construction begins on Highway 169 and work on I-494 will have no lane restrictions during peak travel times. MnDOT is coordinating with adjacent construction projects to ensure that alternate routes won't be under construction while Highway 169 is closed and to avoid conflicts with future Highway Improvement projects.

CONSTRUCTION

What are the detour routes for residents and businesses for the Highway 169 bridge closure area over Nine Mile Creek?

The bridge will be closed from late-January to October 2017 between Bren Road and 7th Street (5th Street, Lincoln Drive exit). Access will remain off of Bren Road and 7th Street ramps (5th Street, Lincoln Drive exit) for local businesses and residents. Official detours will be:

- **Northbound Highway 169:** Highway 62 East to Highway 100 North to I-394 West
- **Southbound Highway 169:** I-394 West to I-494 South to Highway 169

MnDOT is also preparing a plan for preferred local routes to access businesses that will be available on the project website once completed.

WHAT IS THE CONSTRUCTION TIMING FOR THE PROJECT?

While these are separate projects along Highway 169, all four improvement projects along this section of Highway 169 will be coordinated appropriately. Construction phasing will occur as follows:

- The construction work for the bridge replacement project will be limited to late-January through October 2017 and requires a full road closure between Bren Road and 7th Street (5th Street, Lincoln Drive exit).
- Lengthening the lanes at the Cedar Lake Road interchange and closing the 16th Street ramps to and from southbound Highway 169 will occur during summer 2017. These ramps will not be closed at the same time.
- Starting in Spring 2017, the rest of the project area from Highways 55 to 62 will be reduced to one lane in each direction for road repair. Ramps will also close for two weeks each at Highway 55, Betty Crocker Drive, Seventh Street, Excelsior Boulevard, Cedar Lake Road, Highway 7, West 36th Street and the southbound exit of Minnetonka Boulevard while crews make improvements. Sidewalks near these intersections will be improved to provide greater access for walkers and people with disabilities.
- In Summer 2017, two separate weekend directional closures (one northbound, one southbound) will occur from Hwy 55 to I-394 for concrete pavement repair. I-394 and Hwy 55 ramps will also temporarily close during the two weekend directional closures. In addition, around the same time, two separate weekend directional closures (one northbound, one southbound) will occur from I-394 to Minnetonka Boulevard for concrete pavement repair.
- Detours will be posted and adjacent ramps will not be closed at the same time.

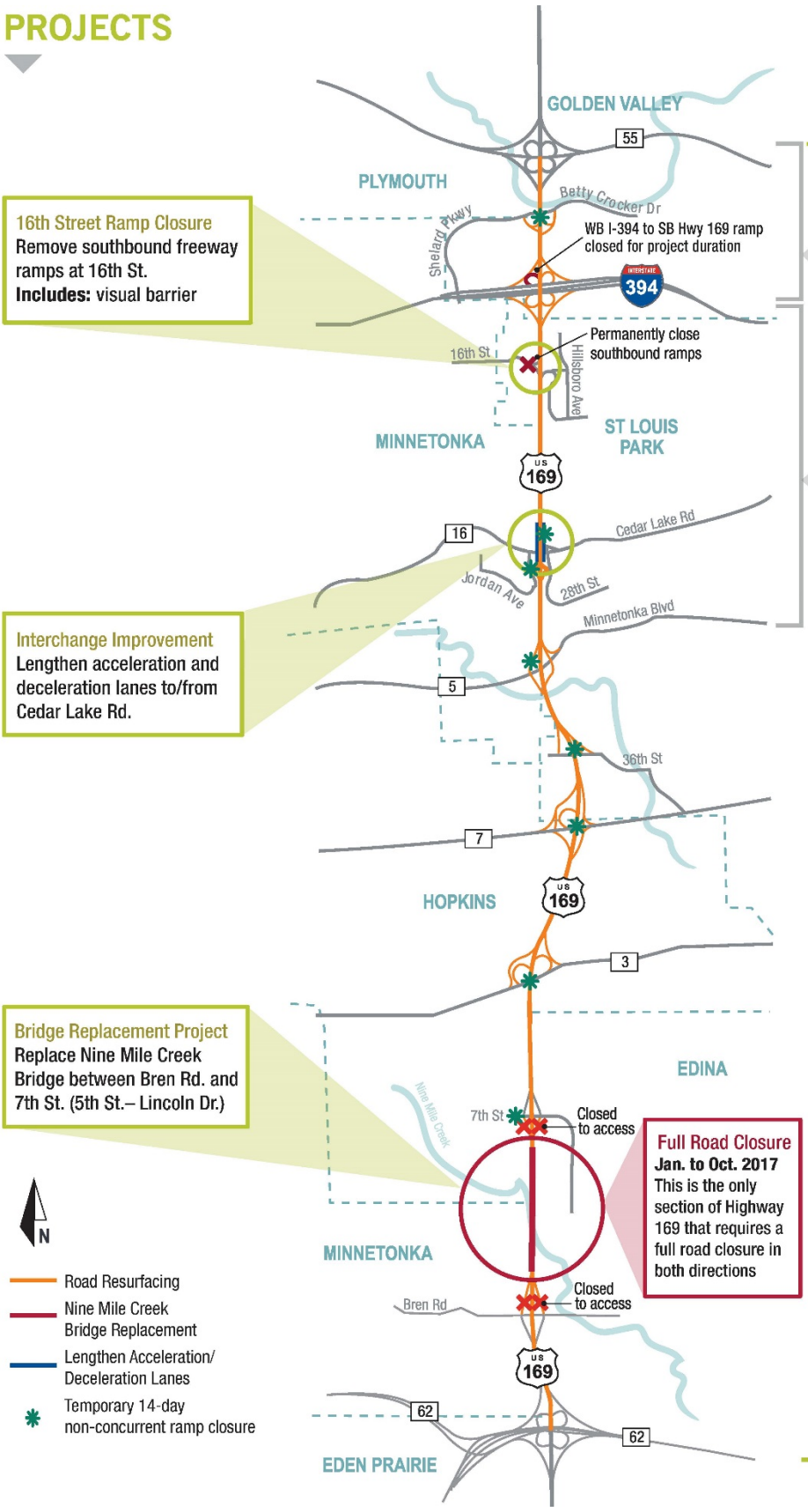
See construction staging map for location of projects.

PROJECTS

16th Street Ramp Closure
Remove southbound freeway ramps at 16th St.
Includes: visual barrier

Interchange Improvement
Lengthen acceleration and deceleration lanes to/from Cedar Lake Rd.

Bridge Replacement Project
Replace Nine Mile Creek Bridge between Bren Rd. and 7th St. (5th St.– Lincoln Dr.)



Full Road Closure
Jan. to Oct. 2017
This is the only section of Highway 169 that requires a full road closure in both directions

CONSTRUCTION STAGING

Road Resurfacing
From Highway 55 to Minnetonka Blvd. requires:

- Two separate weekend directional closures (one northbound, one southbound) for two separate segments: two closures from Hwy 55 to I-394 and two closures from I-394 to Minnetonka Blvd.
- I-394 and Hwy 55 ramps will also temporarily close during the two weekend directional closures

Includes: repair median barrier, noise wall and pedestrian crossing upgrades

Road Resurfacing
From Highway 55 to Highway 62 requires:

- A single lane of traffic in each direction (northbound and southbound) to perform the work

How will traffic overflow to alternate routes and local roads be managed?

MnDOT is coordinating with the cities and Hennepin County to determine if temporary changes should be made to any local roads during the closure so traffic delays can be minimized and traffic does not divert onto roads that cannot accommodate more vehicles. Temporary changes could include changes to signal timing, new signing, and truck restrictions.

How is construction being coordinated with adjacent construction projects during the closures on Highway 169?

MnDOT is working with the cities of Hopkins, Minnetonka, St. Louis Park, and Edina, as well as Hennepin County and the Southwest light rail project to identify construction projects that may be occurring during the time of the road closure. Where possible, MnDOT will work to avoid any conflicts between projects to minimize traffic impacts. MnDOT will schedule any closures on Highway 169 after the completion of work on Highway 100 and while there are no full-time lane closures on I-494.

BRIDGE CLOSURE

Why does the bridge need to be replaced?

The current condition of the bridge has major deterioration due to drainage deficiencies and needs to be replaced.

How will the bridge be replaced?

Highway 169 will be closed from late-January to October 2017 at the bridge location, which is between Bren Road and 7th Street (5th Street, Lincoln Drive exit) to allow for the removal and replacement of the existing bridge. The bridge over Nine Mile Creek will be reconstructed as a causeway, which is a raised road across a low or wet ground supported on fill rather than piers.

How will be the causeway effect the floodplain and flood elevations once it is built?

Currently, the old road bed under the bridge acts as a berm, holding storm water back for small rain events, but overtopping during larger flood events. Modeling has been conducted in coordination with the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District to determine that a causeway design that would not impact the floodplain. The proposed causeway design includes the creation of replacement storage volume adjacent to the causeway to compensate for fill in the floodplain; a number of large culverts to allow flow through the causeway to prevent floodplain increase; and reconstructing the creek culvert in-kind in size and elevation. The causeway will provide the same type of flood relief during rain events as the old road bed does now.

16TH STREET CLOSURE

Why are the southbound 16th Street ramps proposed to close?

The existing ramps are sub-standard and not safe. MnDOT is taking a proactive measure to eliminate crashes at this location. There are several reasons for closing the 16th Street ramps, including:

- The design deficiencies at 16th Street are substandard. The issues include:
  - Short ramp lengths limiting acceleration and deceleration speeds for vehicles
  - Tight curves on the 16th Street ramps limit driver sight distance and affect driver reaction times
  - Ramps lead to/from residential streets with pedestrians crossing the area
  - Short distance between ramps and other residential streets (Jordan Avenue, Kilmer Avenue)
  - Rear-end crashes and several near misses
- Freeway efficiency
  - Fewer Highway 169 exits means less interruption to traffic
  - The closure is part of MnDOT's program to make Highway 169 operate as a freeway (22nd Street and 23rd Street ramps previously closed)
- Several viable and close alternative access options for current users of the 16th Street ramps.

What are the benefits of closing the ramps?

Closing the 16th Street ramps:

- Improves safety for the neighborhood and drivers by eliminating the crashes caused by the ramp design and cut through traffic
- Improves roadway and interchange operations
- Eliminates cut through traffic
- Adds a visual barrier separating traffic from residential area
- Necessary for any future improvements to Highway 169

What are the alternate routes for the 16th Street ramp closure off of Highway 169?

The project involves permanently closing the southbound 16th Street ramps. Highway access to the residential neighborhood served by 16th Street is provided by the following alternate routes:

FROM I-394:

- Hopkins Crossroad Interchange, Wayzata Boulevard (S Frontage Road), Ford Road

FROM HIGHWAY 169:

- Cedar Lake Road (interchange), Ford Road
- Betty Crocker Drive, Shelard Parkway, Wayzata Boulevard (S Frontage Road), Ford Road

Are the northbound 16th Street ramps proposed for closure? If not, why?

MnDOT's long term vision includes closing the ramps on the northbound (east) segment of Highway 169. At this time, MnDOT does not have approval from the city of St. Louis Park for this closure so it was not included in this project.

What is the decision-making process for closing the 16th Street ramps?

MnDOT requested for municipal consent from the city of St. Louis Park to close the access and construct the visual barrier. As part of this request process, a public hearing was held at the St. Louis Park City Hall prior to the city taking action on the request. The St. Louis Park City Council approved the municipal consent request on Dec. 7, 2015. The expected start date for the project will be determined once a contractor is hired in July 2016.

In addition to proposing to close the southbound exit and entrance ramps, were any other alternatives considered?

No other alternatives are considered viable to improve the safety of the ramps within the existing right of way of Highway 169.

CEDAR LAKE ROAD INTERCHANGE IMPROVEMENT

How will the acceleration lane under the bridge be extended on Highway 169 for the Cedar Lake Road interchange project?

The Cedar Lake Road improvement project involves lengthening the acceleration lane going northbound and the deceleration lane going southbound on Highway 169. There is currently a shoulder space of 16 feet between the right lane and the bridge pier. The newly lengthened acceleration lane will use 12 feet of that extra space with an additional 4 feet for an adjacent shoulder.

NOISE

What warrants a noise wall to be built?

Under Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidelines, a noise analysis must be conducted when a proposed roadway improvement includes a substantial change to the existing alignment, or includes an additional lane(s) of traffic. For a noise wall to be built, a traffic noise analysis must be completed to predict future noise levels in the project area. If predicted future noise levels exceed FHWA noise abatement criteria or state noise standards, a noise wall must be considered. For impacted areas, a noise wall will be included as part of a project if the analysis determines that the noise wall provides a significant noise level reduction, is feasible to construct, is cost-effective, and that its construction is supported by the community that would benefit from the wall. For more information about noise, visit MnDOT's website.

What is the difference between a noise wall and a visual barrier?

A noise wall is designed to a height and location to effectively reduce the level of traffic noise in an adjacent neighborhood. A visual barrier allows the neighborhood to be separated from a highway, but is typically shorter than a noise barrier.

FUTURE PLANS FOR HIGHWAY 169

What are the plans for adding capacity to Highway 169?

MnDOT and the Metropolitan Council are currently studying the Highway 169 corridor between County Road 41 in Shakopee and Highway 55 in Golden Valley to evaluate options for making mobility improvements on the highway. This study's recommendations will be available in early 2017. There will be opportunities for public input as the study progresses. For more information about this project, contact: Brad Larsen, MnDOT at 651-234-7024, brad.larsen@state.mn.us, or visit the project website: http://www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects/hwy169study/.

MORE INFORMATION

Who can I contact for more questions and/or comments about the project?

You can contact either:

- Dave Aeikens, MnDOT Communications and Engagement, 651-234-7511 or david.aeikens@state.mn.us
- Andrew Lutaya, MnDOT Project Manager, 651-234-7563 or andrew.lutaya@state.mn.us

How can I stay up to date on project development?

Sign up for project email updates on the project website: http://www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects/hwy169hopkins/.