



May 2006

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Wisconsin Bound this Summer?

Leave Early & Stay Late!

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Talk to the Tollway



Navigating the Open Road

[In our quick survey, give us your feedback on various layouts for Open Road Tolling signage...](#)

Open Road Tolling

Now Available at 9 plazas!



Plazas Opening in 2006:
Devon & 163rd St. (I-294);
Belvidere & Marengo (I-90);
DeKalb & Dixon (I-88);
South Beloit (I-90);
Waukegan (I-294);
York/Meyers (I-88); River
Road & Elgin (I-90).

Dear Tollway Customer,

The upcoming Memorial Day Weekend marks the beginning of the busy summer travel season. Hopefully, you are already enjoying the time savings provided by Open Road Tolling (ORT) at 9 toll plazas. We will be providing ORT for I-PASS users at all 20 mainline toll plazas by this fall.

In order to deliver ORT in just two years, a number of toll plazas are under construction this spring/summer. While the Tollway is doing its best to minimize the impact of construction on traffic, it is likely to slow down travelers heading towards Wisconsin who have always encountered traffic on summer weekends. To get around potential delays, please remember to stay cool, plan ahead, and use I-PASS.

For more summer travel tips, please read the Feature Story in this newsletter. And be sure to abide by the reduced speed limits in work zones for the safety of workers and drivers. Since ORT will be available at all mainline plazas by this fall, next summer will be a breeze during your escape to Wisconsin.

Have a safe summer,
Rod R. Blagojevich
Governor

Construction Update

Congestion-Relief Program At-a-Glance

Governor Blagojevich's \$5.3 billion Program will reduce travel times by:

- Rebuilding/restoring 90 percent of the system
- Adding lanes to 117 miles of existing roads
- Converting 20 mainline toll plazas to Open Road Tolling
- Extending I-355 South by 2007

Illinois Tollway
Open Roads for a Faster Future

Question of the Month

Q: When are the 82nd/83rd Street Toll Plazas going to be completed? It seems like this project is going on forever.

A: We apologize for any inconvenience caused by plaza conversion to Open Road Tolling and are working hard to share information and keep lanes open to minimize the impact on traffic.

We understand that construction is slowing traffic down, but the good news is that the last stage of construction to complete the final two ORT lanes in each direction has begun at 82nd/83rd Street. A third ORT lane is scheduled to open at 83rd Street the week of May 22. A third ORT lane at 82nd Street is scheduled to open in early June. The final ORT lane in each direction is scheduled to be completed this summer. The 82nd/83rd

[Tri-State \(I-294\)](#) | [North-South \(I-355\)](#) | [Northwest Tollway \(I-90\)](#) | [Open Road Tolling \(ORT\)](#)



Rebuild & Widen

South Tri-State Phase I: Kingery Expressway to 167th Street

The South Tri-State from the Kingery Expressway (I-80/94) in South Holland to 95th St. in Oak Lawn will be rebuilt and widened to four lanes with work now underway in the five miles south of 167th St.

- Northbound work from CSX Railroad to 167th St. is complete.
- Southbound work continues with 3 southbound lanes on the northbound side of the road from I-80 to Markham Yard and only two lanes crossover from Markham Yard to CSX Railroad.
- Median work done over the winter will ensure completion of southbound lanes by fall 2006.



Steel girders are in place over I-294 to carry traffic on a new ramp bridge from northbound I-294 to westbound I-80, which is being rebuilt and widened.

Central Tri-State

Balmoral Ave. to Dempster St.

Work begins this fall to rebuild the Central Tri-State and widen it to four lanes.

- Work starts in northbound lanes this year; southbound starts in 2007.
- Three lanes will remain open to traffic during daytime hours.
- Project scheduled to be completed by end of 2008.

[Read More About I-294](#) | [Back to Main Menu](#)



Extension *I-55 to I-80*

The North-South Tollway is being extended 12.5 miles south from the Stevenson Expressway to serve

Street plazas already have two Open Road Tolling lanes.

The construction at these plazas was especially challenging because of the space constraints in the work zone, which forced workers to complete the first two ORT lanes before starting to complete the final two lanes in each direction.

[Submit a Question to the Tollway*](#)

*All concerns will be addressed, but we may not be able to provide a personalized answer to each person who submits a question.

I-PASS UPDATE



In addition to buying I-PASS at Jewel-Osco, did you know you can also buy it at select Road Ranger locations in north central Illinois, southern Wisconsin and northwest Indiana? This is especially important in the Rockford area where Osco stores were sold to CVS and will no longer sell I-PASS.



Road Ranger Locations Include:

growing Will County, and is scheduled to be completed in 2007.

- Construction continues on the 1.3-mile long bridge that will carry I-355 traffic over the Des Plaines River Valley.
- Crossroad bridge construction continues this spring, requiring the closure of Gougar Rd. and 163rd St. A detour is posted.
- Interchange work has begun at I-55 with shoulder closures and reduced lanes



A 100-foot long steel liner is placed in the ground for the foundation of the new Des Plaines River Valley Bridge north of Bluff Rd.

on the I-55 frontage roads for construction of bridge piers and retaining walls.

- At I-80, work has begun to build the center pier for a flyover ramp bridge.
- At U.S. 6, clearing work has begun and a runaround will be put into place this spring.

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Bridge and Interchange Improvements

Construction by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) is underway to widen IL Route 173 under the Tollway and to build a full-access interchange. The Tollway bridge is being widened to accommodate a wider Route 173.



Workers removed the median curb as part of preliminary work to rebuild the flyover bridge over the Northwest Tollway to U.S. 20.

- All traffic is now on the westbound side of the bridge over Route 173 through the use of the shoulders while the eastbound side of the bridge is rebuilt and widened.
- Traffic will be shifted to the new eastbound bridge this summer and work will begin to rebuild the westbound side of the bridge.
- Work on the bridge is scheduled to be completed in

Illinois—Hampshire (19 N. 681 U.S. Highway 20) and Loves Park (7500 E. Riverside Blvd.)

Wisconsin—South Beloit (6070 Gardner St.)

Indiana—Lake Station (1235 Ripley St. and 2151 Ripley St.)

Manage Your Account
Online:

<http://www.getipass.com/>

Call: 1.800.UC.IPASS

Minimizing Impact



Working Off-Peak Hours

If you are driving down the road late at night and see a flurry of activity and lights, it just might be the Illinois Tollway working overnight to complete congestion-relief projects and minimize the impact of construction on heavier, daytime traffic.

The Illinois Tollway employs a number of innovative techniques to keep traffic moving during the day, including the use of crossover lanes and shoulders for daily traffic while keeping the same number of lanes open to motorists. The Tollway also regularly does paving, bridge repairs, and pavement repairs at night, when fewer vehicles are on the road.

November. The interchange is scheduled be completed in 2007.

The flyover ramp bridge over the Northwest Tollway from U.S. 20 to eastbound I-90 is being rebuilt. This is the original bridge that opened in 1958.

- The ramp from U.S. 20 to eastbound I-90 will remain closed until late fall.
- Traffic will be staged to rebuild the bridge in stages, keeping the eastbound exit from I-90 to U.S. 20 open during construction.
- The project also includes adding shoulders and widening the approach to the bridge for a smoother ride. New lighting and guardrail also will be installed for safety.

[Read About Ongoing I-90 Projects](#) | [Back to Main Menu](#)



Systemwide Toll Plaza Conversions

By the end of 2006, all 20 mainline toll plazas will be converted to Open Road Tolling (ORT) for non-stop I-PASS travel. We apologize for delays created by this work.

- Remaining plazas to be converted in 2006 include South Beloit, Belvidere, Marengo, Elgin, Devon, and River Rd. (I-90); Waukegan and 163rd St. (I-294); York/Meyers, DeKalb and Dixon (I-88).
- Delays are expected, so allow extra time if planning trips through the Tri-State's 82nd St., 83rd St. and 163rd St. toll plazas, as well as the plazas just south of the Wisconsin state line (South Beloit on I-90 and Waukegan on I-94) on weekends during the upcoming summer travel season.
- The Illinois Department of Transportation project to widen the Tollway Bridge over IL Route 173 is just north of the South Beloit Toll Plaza ORT project.



The South Beloit toll plaza reconstruction includes a new plaza building and overhead walkway.

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Feature Story

Wisconsin Bound This Summer? Leave Early & Stay Late

Setting and removing bridge beams over the road is an activity that is always done at night, when temporary, 15-minute full stops of traffic are directed by Illinois State Police to ensure safety while beams are lifted over the road. All lane closures are typically removed before 5 a.m., to minimize the impact on the morning rush hour.

Revive at the Oases



Not Just for Vacations Anymore!

In case you haven't been to a Tollway oasis lately, you should know that they not only look better, they serve better too. First, there is a much larger variety of food tenants so you can eat anything from pizza to Chinese food to Greek food. And you can get more than just food in these clean and open "malls." In addition to a convenience store, you can buy tobacco products, CDs, DVDS as well as phone services and accessories. So stop by next week on your way to/from work; they are on your way, every day.

Other State Programs

In addition to Open Road Tolling, following are other state programs designed to improve your quality of life.

If you have a summer home in Wisconsin, then you know that traffic at toll plazas near the state line is always heavy on Friday and Sunday nights from May until September. The situation will be more challenging this year due to Open Road Tolling (ORT) construction at the Marengo, Belvidere & South Beloit toll plazas on I-90 and the Waukegan toll plaza on I-294. But there are things you can do to minimize delays.

First, you can save time and money by having an I-PASS. With I-PASS you can use any lane which gives you the flexibility to choose the quickest route in a toll plaza construction zone. And the more vehicles that have I-PASS and don't need change, the faster everyone gets through the toll plaza. It is worth the \$50 investment even if you only travel the Tollway once in a while because I-PASS never expires and gets you a discount on tolls. You can buy I-PASS at Jewel-Osco and Road Ranger - see I-PASS Update for locations near the state line.

Another way to get to Wisconsin faster this summer is to avoid peak periods by leaving early and staying late. For instance, leaving before 1 p.m. on Friday or before 9 a.m. on Saturday should mean less traffic at the toll plazas. Staying until after 6 pm on Sunday should also help minimize delays at toll plazas under construction.

We apologize for any inconvenience related to ORT construction. We are doing our best to minimize the impact on traffic and deliver non-stop tolling this fall. Keep an eye out for the next newsletter where we promise to provide any updates that may be helpful in traveling to Wisconsin this summer.

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Moving Traffic Along

Read the Signs & Go With the Flow

I-PASS drivers can now stay on the mainline and use Open Road Tolling (ORT) lanes where tolls are collected electronically while you travel at normal highway speeds. But if you don't have your I-PASS with you or if you need to exit the Tollway immediately following the toll plaza, bear right to pay in the lanes in the cash plaza.

Your I-PASS will work in the cash lanes, but follow the signage carefully. Plazas with exits immediately after have one I-PASS Only Lane that allows for non-stop travel up to 15 mph. In the tollbooth lanes, your toll will be deducted

Avoid the Dan Ryan

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) is starting the major re-construction of the Dan Ryan Expressway (I-90/94). Work begins in April in both directions of the Dan Ryan on Chicago's South Side from 13th Street to the Bishop Ford (I-94) / I-57 Interchange.

Of the six existing lanes in each direction, three lanes will be out of service, creating major delays. For more information, please visit <http://www.avoidtheyan.com/>

Health Insurance for Kids

If your children do not have health insurance, *All Kids* may be right for your family. *All Kids* is a new state program that gives every child in Illinois access to comprehensive, affordable health insurance. To start receiving health benefits [visit the *All Kids* website](#) and click on "Enrollment Information."

Affordable Prescriptions

I-SaveRx was created to provide a safe and affordable way for the people of Illinois to save money on the cost of prescription drugs. To start saving up to 80% on the cost of your prescription drugs, [visit the *I-SaveRx* website](#) or call toll-free 1-866-ISAVE33 (1-866-472-8333).

from your I-PASS account, but you must come to a complete stop until the attendant raises the toll gate.

It is important to be on the lookout for guide signs that begin at least one mile before each plaza and bear right if you want to pay cash or exit.

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Safety Zone

100 Days of Heat

Beginning Memorial Day weekend, Illinois State Police District 15 will turn up the "heat" with special enforcement details for 100 days ending with the Labor Day Holiday weekend. Called "100 Days of Heat," the effort is a comprehensive traffic safety program during the busy summer construction and travel months. The effort includes the ongoing Operation Hard Hat details to catch speeders in work zones. That's where police pose as construction workers with radar equipment. Systemwide efforts are also in force to ticket speeders, DUIs and overweight trucks using unmarked police cruisers, aircraft, portable weigh stations and officers on motorcycles, a first for the Illinois Tollway. And, don't forget the photo speed enforcement vans coming soon. So, the "heat" will be on this summer!



Police now have motorcycles for easier access and speed enforcement in tight work zones.

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