N/NW 85th St & Greenwood Ave N | Paving Projects

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Frequently Asked Questions – Transportation and neighborhood traffic during construction

Why are eastbound detours required?
The existing roadway on N/NW 85th St is narrow, measuring approximately 40 feet wide in most areas. To ensure the safety of drivers and pedestrians, and allow enough space for crews to complete their work, the work zone needs to occupy about 25 feet of the existing roadway. This leaves only about 15 feet for travel lanes; a minimum of 22 feet is needed to maintain two-way traffic. As a result eastbound traffic must be detoured during each phase.

What is the planned detour route during each phase?
SDOT's traffic management experts have been working to identify the best detour options to keep people safe and traffic moving during construction. Starting in January 2012, SDOT will detour eastbound traffic from N/NW 85th St onto N/NW 80th St during each phase.

N/NW 80th St is already a congested roadway. Why is SDOT using it as a detour route?
Alternate east and westbound travel options are limited in north Seattle, and N/NW 80th St is the closest arterial route that connects I-5 to 15th Ave NW. While N/NW 80th St will be the primary detour route, it cannot hold all of the traffic that N/NW 85th St carries each day. We will be relying on drivers to plan ahead and choose alternate arterial routes during detours to keep traffic moving through the area.

Will the detour route be signed?
Yes, the contractor will be required to clearly identify the detour route using various methods of signage.

Will access to or from I-5 be affected by this project?
Yes. In order to create a sufficient amount of work space to keep drivers and workers safe during construction near the on- and off-ramps of I-5, SDOT will need to close the ramps to I-5 at N 85th St in summer 2012.

- Due to the eastbound road closure on N/NW 85th St, the I-5 on-ramps at N 85th St will be closed during Phases 5 in summer/fall 2012, and drivers will be detoured to the northbound on-ramp at N 80th St and the southbound on-ramp at Banner Way NE.
- In addition, SDOT is planning to close the southbound I-5 off-ramp, and northbound I-5 on-ramps for up to two weeks in August 2012.

SDOT will work closely with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to coordinate necessary ramp closures. WSDOT and SDOT will work together to notify the traveling public in advance of any closures.

Will SDOT make improvements to nearby streets prior to eastbound detours?
SDOT will rebuild the intersection at N 80th St and Greenwood Ave N before implementing the detour on N/NW 80th St to improve traffic flow through the area. In addition, SDOT will make temporary adjustments to N/NW 80th St to make it function better as a detour route, including signal timing modifications, lane restriping, and removal of parking during peak travel periods.

Are travel times expected to increase during construction?
As with nearly all roadway improvement projects, reducing the number of available travel lanes during construction results in traffic congestion, adding time to trips. Travel times along N/NW 85th St and the detour route (N/NW 80th St) will vary by time of day and also during each phase depending on the types of activities happening.

Do I have to follow the signed detour route?
No. While we encourage drivers to follow signed detour routes, drivers can choose a route that best suits their needs. Drivers should however stay on arterials during detours and avoid cutting through neighborhood side streets.

What is SDOT doing to minimize traffic on local streets during the detours?
As drivers adjust to the detours in each phase, we expect congestion and other issues to arise. We are attempting to balance the various needs of the community – maintaining east/west travel for commuters, allowing access to businesses, as well as keeping streets safe for all who live and play near the project area. We will monitor traffic closely and make adjustments as needed. If a safety issue arises during the detours, we will promptly identify the right tool and implement a solution.

How will SDOT address safety concerns in my neighborhood?
We are committed safety during construction and continued coordination with commuters, businesses and nearby neighborhoods. Below are some examples of tools we can use during construction to manage traffic and keep people safe on neighborhood streets:

- Traffic speed and volume studies
- Signal timing modifications
- Left turn restrictions
- Parking restrictions
- Directional signs
- Uniformed Police Officers and Flaggers
- Adding parking on neighborhood streets

Who should I contact if there is a safety issue in my neighborhood as a result of construction?
During construction, a communications representative will staff a 24-hour project line (206-496-9993) to answer your questions and address your concerns about traffic and safety. You can also reach the project team by sending an email to pave_85th@seattle.gov. If there is an immediate safety issue in your neighborhood, we would encourage you to report it to the local police for enforcement.

Will access to residences or businesses be affected during construction?
Pedestrian access to residences and businesses will be maintained at all times during construction. Some sidewalk closures will be required and pedestrians may be rerouted to approach a building from a different direction.

Vehicle access will also be maintained with the exception of intermittent driveway closures on N/NW 85th St. Driveway closures will be limited to short periods of time (no more than 48 hours at a time). SDOT will communicate with properties owners, building managers and tenants to make sure they have advanced notification before work begins that could impact access.

Will side streets be closed during the project?
Yes, non-arterial side streets may be closed for extended periods of time during construction in each phase. However, no two adjacent side streets will be closed at the same time, and the contractor will be required to maintain access to all driveways on side streets.

Will there be any impacts or changes to parking during construction?
During each construction phase, all parking and loading zones will be temporarily removed within the project corridor on N/NW 85th St and Greenwood Ave N. Parking and loading zones along side streets may also be impacted at times. Access to parking areas will be interrupted intermittently based on the construction schedule. No permanent parking changes will be implemented as part of these projects.

Will the number of cars parking in my neighborhood increase during construction?
As a result of temporary parking restrictions on NW 85th St and Greenwood Ave N, it is possible that the number of vehicles parking on residential streets may increase. Parking on residential streets can actually decrease cut-through traffic and decrease speeds, which are desirable effects to neighbors concerned about increased traffic in their neighborhood.

Will bus routes be affected by construction?
Metro bus service will be maintained during construction; however, Metro will detour eastbound routes off of N/NW 85th St during each phase of construction. SDOT will coordinate with King County Metro on any transit service changes during construction, including temporary relocation of bus stops or bus route changes and detours. Metro will communicate any stop or route changes to their customers directly.

SDOT is also working with Metro to accommodate permanent transit changes along these corridors, including consolidating bus stops along N/NW 85th St and improving the reliability of Route #5 along Greenwood Ave N by removing peak-hour parking and adding signal priority for buses.

What can I do to help these projects be successful?
You can help keep traffic moving and help everyone stay safe during construction by:

- Planning ahead for your trips.
- Considering alternate methods of transportation such as bicycles, buses and carpools.
- Following the directions of signs and flaggers.
- Using arterials and avoiding cutting through neighborhood streets.
- Adhering to the posted speed limit.
- Using pedestrian crosswalks and avoiding entering designated work zones.
- Always yielding to pedestrians and other vehicles inside traffic circles.
- Signing up for weekly construction updates to stay informed.

How can I stay informed?
You can follow our progress by:

- Visiting the project website (http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/pave_85th.htm) often.
- Signing up for weekly construction updates by sending an email to pave_85th@Seattle.gov.
- Contacting the 24-hour project line at (206) 496-9993.