



Forward 44: Southwest

September 2026 Newsletter



MoDOT Launches Forward 44 with Springfield I-44 Groundbreaking

On August 24, 2026, MoDOT officially kicked off the Forward 44: Southwest I-44 Improvement Project with a groundbreaking ceremony in Springfield at the I-44 and Mulroy Road/Missouri Route 744 interchange, marking the start of a multi-phase initiative to enhance I-44 from Newton County to Laclede County. This transformative corridor project represents a major investment in safety, capacity, and long-term economic vitality across southwest Missouri.

The event brought together state and regional leaders who underscored the importance of the project for freight movement, regional connectivity, and future growth. Speakers included Congressman Eric Burlison, State Representative Bill Owen, Missouri Highways and Transportation Commissioner Ann Marie Baker, Executive Director of the Ozarks Transportation Organization Sara Fields, Capital Construction Project Contractor Travis Koestner, MoDOT Project Director Kristi Bachman, and MoDOT Southwest District Engineer Stacy Reese. During her remarks, Fields noted the scale of the investment, stating, “This is a \$471 million dollar project. This is the largest project in our region’s history.” Congressman Burlison highlighted the long-term benefits the improvements will bring, saying, “...the work that will be done is going to be benefiting, not only our children and grandchildren, but our great and great-great grandchildren.”

The Forward 44 improvements will target several high-impact locations along the corridor, including major interchange upgrades, pavement and safety enhancements, and strategic widening to support growing traffic demands. Construction will unfold in phases. For instance, at Fidelity, in Jasper County, work is scheduled to begin later in the winter after public consultation. Phasing will be coordinated through MoDOT’s design-build approach with the Capital-CMT Team, comprised of Capital Paving & Construction and Crawford, Murphy & Tilly Inc.

Key project elements outlined include:

- Major interchanges at I-44/I-49 North in Fidelity and I-44/Missouri Route 13 in Springfield;
- Widening to six lanes in the greater Springfield area;
- Pavement and safety improvements in Greene, Webster, and Laclede counties;
- Bridge improvements at Greene County Route EE in Springfield; and
- Pavement improvements in Lawrence County

The groundbreaking marks a significant milestone in advancing critical infrastructure for the region—improving travel efficiency, strengthening economic competitiveness, and supporting safer mobility for Missourians for decades to come. Learn more about this project here: <https://www.modot.org/projects/forward-44-southwest-i-44-improvements-project>.



Upcoming Public Hearings

You're invited to attend our upcoming public hearings for the Forward 44: Southwest I-44 Improvements project. Stop by to learn more about the proposed improvements, view project information, talk with the project team, and share your feedback.

Springfield Area

September 24, 2026 | 4:30-6:00

Wilsons Logistics Arena, Ozark Empire Fairgrounds
3001 N Grant Ave, Springfield, MO 65803

Joplin/Fidelity Area

November 17, 2026 | 4:30-6:00

Victory Christian Center
13996 Burr Oak Rd, Carthage, MO 64836

Forward 44 Update

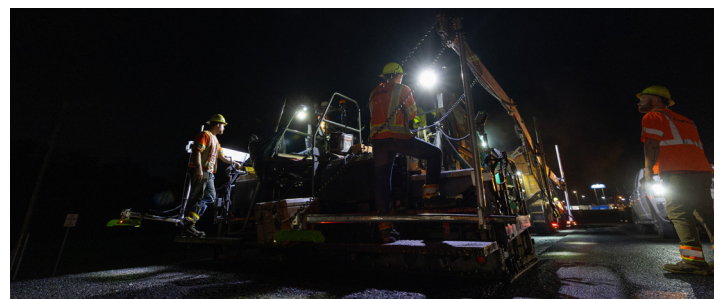
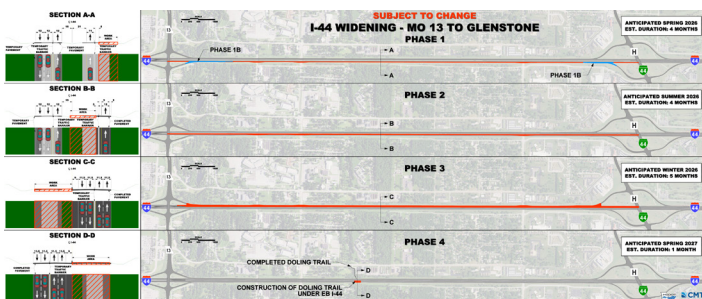
Forward 44: Springfield

It has been a busy summer across I-44, within the Missouri Route 13/Kansas Expressway and U.S. Route 65 project limits. The Springfield Improvements Project, part of MoDOT's Forward 44 initiative, carries a budget of \$70.7 million, including \$13.4 million in general revenue funding provided by the Missouri General Assembly and the governor's office.

The improvement effort spans multiple segments: widening I-44 to six lanes between Kansas Expressway and U.S. Route 65, replacing bridges at Broadway, Grant, and National Avenues, resurfacing the pavement from Chestnut Expressway to the West Bypass, and installing a sound wall and a pedestrian underpass.

The eastbound lanes between U.S. Route 65 and Glenstone Avenue are currently in Phase 4. Crews are focused on reconstructing the eastbound lanes, a key component of the Forward 44: Springfield Improvements Project. Work underway includes the removal of old pavement, grading and compaction for the new lane, installation of a rock-fill base, and the extension of box culverts to enhance drainage capacity and overall structural stability.

The westbound lanes of I-44 between Kansas Expressway and Glenstone Avenue are currently in Phase 1. This segment involves ongoing ramp work. Contractor teams are also placing asphalt for the new westbound driving lane and constructing emergency pull-off locations in the median. Paving of the new westbound lanes is expected to be completed soon, and then crews will begin installing guardrail and finishing slopes. Bridge work for phase 1 has been completed. Phase 2 is expected to begin mid-September. Once this phase begins, the eastbound driving lane will be in its final configuration and will allow work to begin in the median.



Between Chestnut Expressway and the West Bypass, crews are replacing guardrails using nighttime lane closures and completing striping. With these critical phases progressing simultaneously, the Springfield project is delivering significant capacity, safety, and functional upgrades along this congested I-44 corridor. Learn more about this project here: <https://www.modot.org/projects/forward-44-springfield-improvements>.

Forward 44 Update Continued

Forward 44: Southwest

The Forward 44: Southwest I-44 Improvements Project is a \$471 million Design-Build project that will improve approximately 60 miles of the I-44 corridor at various locations between Newton and Laclede counties. In June 2026, MoDOT selected the Capital-CMT Team, led by Capital Paving & Construction and Crawford, Murphy & Tilly, to deliver the project. Planned improvements include modernization of the I-44/I-49 North interchange in Fidelity, upgrades at the I-44/MO 13 interchange in Springfield, corridor widening, pavement and bridge improvements, and safety enhancements throughout the corridor.

MoDOT developed five prioritized goals to guide the project:

- Deliver the project within the programmed budget.
- Maximize safety and reliability through innovative improvements that reduce crashes, improve traffic flow, and support economic development.
- Construct a durable transportation facility that accommodates freight movement and future growth.
- Minimize impacts to travelers and communities during construction while maintaining the highest level of safety for workers and the traveling public.
- Deliver the project on or before November 15, 2031.

To learn more about the project's scope and schedule, view the [Project Summary Sheet](#).

Schedule Update

The project team currently plans to begin some of the initial ramp extension work on the eastern portion of the corridor in late October 2026. As construction activities approach, motorists and community members are encouraged to stay tuned for additional updates regarding traffic impacts, schedules, and upcoming work activities.

For the latest project information, meeting announcements, and construction updates, visit the [Forward 44 Southwest project website](#).

