

I-64 REOPENS: THREE WEEKS EARLY AND \$11 MILLION UNDER BUDGET

After nearly three years of construction and two years of 5-mile sections of complete interstate closures, the I-64 project reopened to traffic more than three weeks early. More than 20,000 people celebrated the reopening with the "Fun on the Freeway" celebration Dec. 6, 2009.

"Many people said it couldn't be done," said MoDOT Director Pete Rahn. "They said we couldn't close a highway. We couldn't do it in three years and we couldn't do it for the half billion-dollar budget we had available. Now it is done. We have exceeded every goal we set out to achieve. I'm very proud of the MoDOT and Gateway Constructors team and the citizens of St. Louis who made this a success."

The second half of the project, between I-170 and

Kingshighway Boulevard, reopened to traffic on December 7, 2009. Since the reopening, traffic volumes on the 10 mile stretch of I-64 between I-270 and Kingshighway are at or higher than preconstruction volumes. The new lanes and interchanges are handling the increased traffic demand with minor delays for motorists.

The success of the project was celebrated in many ways on December 6. Thousands of local residents came out to run, ride bikes and watch as the ceremonial ribbon was cut near the Tamm Avenue bridge. Interestingly, the final ribbon cutting was at the same spot where work started in April 2007. The Tamm Avenue bridge was dynamited to demo the old bridge and kick off the three years of construction.

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During the course of construction, weather proved to be the only real obstacle to threaten the project's successful completion, with record setting amounts of rain in the spring and summer of 2008, and again in October of 2009. Despite all the rain, crews finished the west half two weeks early and the east half about three weeks early. MoDOT also saved approximately \$11 million they had originally allocated to managing the project, bringing total costs to \$524 million.

The I-64 project provided hundreds of workers with well-paying jobs, employing an average of 350 to 400 people over the life of the contract. MoDOT teamed with Gateway Constructors to train the workforce of tomorrow through an "on the job trainee" program. More than 90 young men and women worked side by side with seasoned craftsmen to learn the skills they will need to work in construction after the I-64 project comes to an end.

"We have proven that our contractors can employ a diverse workforce that reflects the demographics of St. Louis. The next step is that we must continue the momentum of I-64's workforce diversity program through out the region and state," said MoDOT External Civil Rights

Specialist April Brown.

"The I-64 project was an excellent example of how diversity can make a difference in the way projects are run and in changing peoples' lives," said Workforce Development Coordinator Carmen Guynn.

Crews will continue to work through the spring to finish final closeout items along the project. Work will include final landscaping, some bridge painting and staining and striping on the roadway. Crews are also making repairs to slopes by Hanley Road and west of McKnight Road.

Despite the predictions of disaster at the start of the project, it seems clear the I-64 reconstruction was a major success. There will always be inconvenience and hardship on a project of this magnitude, but it went about as well as a large project can go. Motorists were patient and made the necessary changes to their routes and travel times, and the workforce employed by Gateway Constructors did its job quickly and efficiently. Now the entire St Louis region has a better, safer highway to use for decades to come. Everyone involved is proud to have been a part of this successful project.

Lindbergh



**Eastbound at
McKnight**



I-170

BEFORE

AFTER



AFTER



BEFORE

Westbound at
Hanley



AFTER



BEFORE

Hampton



AFTER



BEFORE

Kingshighway



The New I-64 Project
8474 Delport Drive
Vinita Park, MO 63114

CONTACT US

MODOT CUSTOMER SERVICE:
1-314-275-1500

WEBSITE:
www.thenewi64.org

TRAVEL INFORMATION:



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