

## **SOUTHERN THIRD OF I-15 PROJECT OPENS MONDAY**

*Zack Van Eyck*

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Ah, the open road.

After 3 1/2 years of ramp closures, lane restrictions and overnight shutdowns, the southern third of the I-15 reconstruction corridor is about to be liberated.

Monday at 6 a.m. — following yet another weekendlong closure of the entire 17-mile reconstruction zone — the Utah Department of Transportation and its contractor, Wasatch Constructors, will open four lanes of traffic in each direction from the I-215 south junction to 10600 South.

In coming months, some nighttime closures still may be necessary south of the I-215 interchange, but daytime restrictions will be history after this weekend.

The reopening includes all ramps and connections. The southbound ramps at 9000 South, the last to reopen, will be back in working order — and better than before — when the new southern third debuts for Monday's morning commute.

"For so long, we closed things. The good news now is we're going to open things and open them permanently," said Tom Warne, UDOT's executive director.

Warne said one reason Wasatch Constructors won the \$1.325 billion contract for the I-15 rebuild was that it was the only one of the three consortiums bidding for the job that promised an October 2000 opening for the south end.

Eventually, the freeway will feature a fifth lane in each direction — a new carpool lane designated for use only by vehicles with more than one occupant. The high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes will begin at 400 South and end at 9000 South.

UDOT has decided to wait until May 15 of next year to introduce the HOV lanes south of the I-215 south junction. That is the day the rest of the reconstruction corridor — from 600 North to 10600 South — is scheduled to reopen with its new, expanded capacity. Wasatch Constructors has pledged to complete the project on July 15, 2001, three months ahead of its contractual obligation. The project remains on time and on budget, Warne said.

The weekend closure began Friday at 10 p.m. and will end Monday at 6 a.m. when the southern third reopens. Crews will perform a variety of tasks over the weekend, including the re-striping of travel lanes between I-215 and 10600 South.

Several extended closures for ramps in the 2100 South area began Friday. The 2100 South temporary access road was closed, as was the 900 West/2100 South intersection and the southbound I-15 ramps at 2100 South. The I-15 ramps will reopen next spring or summer.

Wednesday will be another significant day on the project. That morning, two major ramps in the downtown area will reopen — the northbound I-15 connection to westbound I-80 and the Salt Lake City International Airport, and the eastbound I-80 offramp at 600 South, serving as a primary access to downtown from the airport.

Five main ramps in the spaghetti bowl — the new I-15/I-80/U-201 junction — are scheduled to open by Thanksgiving, including the recently closed northbound I-15 connection with eastbound I-80.

Also scheduled to open late next month is the eastbound I-80 offramp at State Street and the eastbound I-215 offramp at State Street.

Planned for December openings are the northbound I-15 offramp at 1300 South and the southbound I-15 connector to westbound U-201.

The 4500 South cross-street beneath I-15 is scheduled to reopen Jan. 9, but Warne said Wasatch is ahead of schedule on that job and the street could reopen before the end of the year.