

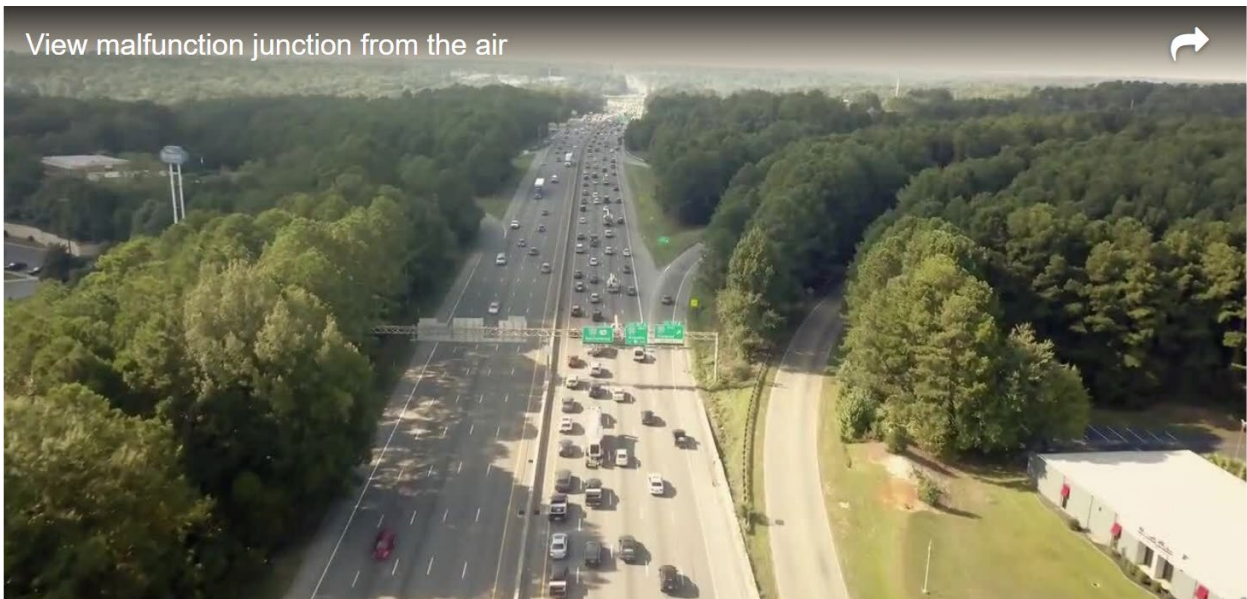
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# The State

## Get ready for year-round construction on Columbia's malfunction junction interstate tangle

BY MORGAN HUGHES UPDATED AUGUST 01, 2022 8:17 AM

View malfunction junction from the air



Major construction begins this month to fix Columbia's "malfunction junction" – the infamous web of interstates northwest of downtown known for backed-up traffic and numerous accidents.

Portions of I-26, I-126 and I-20 will be under construction for the next eight years, as the state's Department of Transportation begins work on a \$2.08 billion project to overhaul the roadways.

Motorists traveling these stretches of road will see year-round construction likely until 2029, when the final phase is finished of what is considered the largest project the state transportation department has ever undertaken. It is dubbed the Carolina Crossroads project.

Among the first steps in untangling the mess of interstate interchanges is building new bridges over railroad tracks and the Saluda River to create a new I-26 interchange at Colonial Life Boulevard and to extend an exit ramp to U.S. 378.

Construction cranes and barges to help with bridge construction will arrive in the Saluda River in coming weeks, said SCDOT project manager Brian Klauk. He could not give an exact date but said that work will begin in August.

Work is also underway to improve the Broad River Road interchange at I-20. Temporary shoulder barriers to protect workers should be erected on that stretch of road in coming weeks, Klauk said.



This map shows an overall view of the Carolina Crossroads project. Courtesy of the South Carolina Department of Transportation

Lane closures and other traffic delays will also begin in early August, but Klauk said there won't be closures during heavy commuter hours. Rather, closures will take place at night and in the early morning.

“At no time are we going to close the interstate entirely,” Klauk said.

A handful of lane closures and other notices are already posted to a website dedicated to the Carolina Crossroads project.

Flagging work on McSwain Drive north of U.S. 378 is expected to begin Aug. 1, which might affect traffic, according to the site.

By Aug. 8, motorists may begin to see lane closures on I-26 westbound between the U.S. 378 interchange and the Saluda River, as well as on I-20 eastbound and westbound between the I-20/I-26 interchange and the Broad River.

The closures on I-26 are expected to last from 7 p.m. Aug. 8 to 7 a.m. Aug 9. The I-20 closures will last daily from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m., ending the morning of Aug. 13.

The dates are estimates and may shift based on weather or other concerns, according to the transportation department. The Carolina Crossroads website provides weekly outlooks for potential lane closures. Motorists can also check SC 511 for real-time closure information.

The entire project will take five phases and cost an estimated \$2.08 billion. The Colonial Life Boulevard interchange and improvements to I-20 are phases one and two, which are expected to wrap up by 2024 and 2025.

The third phase overhauls the web of interstates at Columbia's malfunction junction. That work likely won't begin until 2024 at the earliest.

The final two phases focus on I-26 improvements northwest of the malfunction junction area. That work won't start until at least 2025 and is expected to be completed in 2029.

By its conclusion, transportation officials say motorists will have a drastically safer commute and will save around 100 hours of driving time per year.

Klauk asks for patience and caution from motorists. He previously told The State there could be up to 200 people working on the construction efforts at any given time on just for the first two phases.

Anyone interested in learning more about the project or staying up-to-date on new information can visit [www.scdotcarolinacrossroads.com](http://www.scdotcarolinacrossroads.com) or follow the Twitter account @scdotCrossroads. There will also be a public information session Aug. 30 at Dutch Square Mall.

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