

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is this project needed?

After nearly 60 years of service life, there is significant deterioration on the viaduct (i.e., the bridge portion of this section of I-70). Furthermore, traffic volumes have increased, highway design criteria have changed and the area around the viaduct has undergone evolving development. **This project will enhance safety with wider shoulders, flatten the curve near Third Street, and extend acceleration and deceleration lanes in certain areas.**

What are the different phases of the project and schedule?

- Phase 1: Demolition of acquired properties for right-of-way, archeological survey work and utility relocation. Summer of 2022 to Summer of 2024.
- Phase 2: Pavement maintenance and bridge deck patching on seven bridges along I-70 in downtown Topeka. Work during 2022 and 2023 construction seasons.
- Phase 3: The actual construction project for the replacement of I-70, the Polk Quincy viaducts and Fourth Street bridges. Scheduled to begin in early 2025.

Drivers should expect traffic delays during the next few years as lane and ramp closures, as well as utility relocations, are necessary.

When will I-70 be closed?

Closure will occur from early spring to late fall of 2026. The construction dates will be determined by the contractor.

How will I access downtown during construction?

There will be a portion of I-70 from Topeka Boulevard to Sixth Street that will need to close to reconstruct I-70. The truck route and through traffic detour route will use I-470 around the south side of Topeka. To access downtown from the west side, travel I-70 to Topeka Boulevard. To access downtown from the east side, travel I-70 to Tenth Street or Eighth Street.

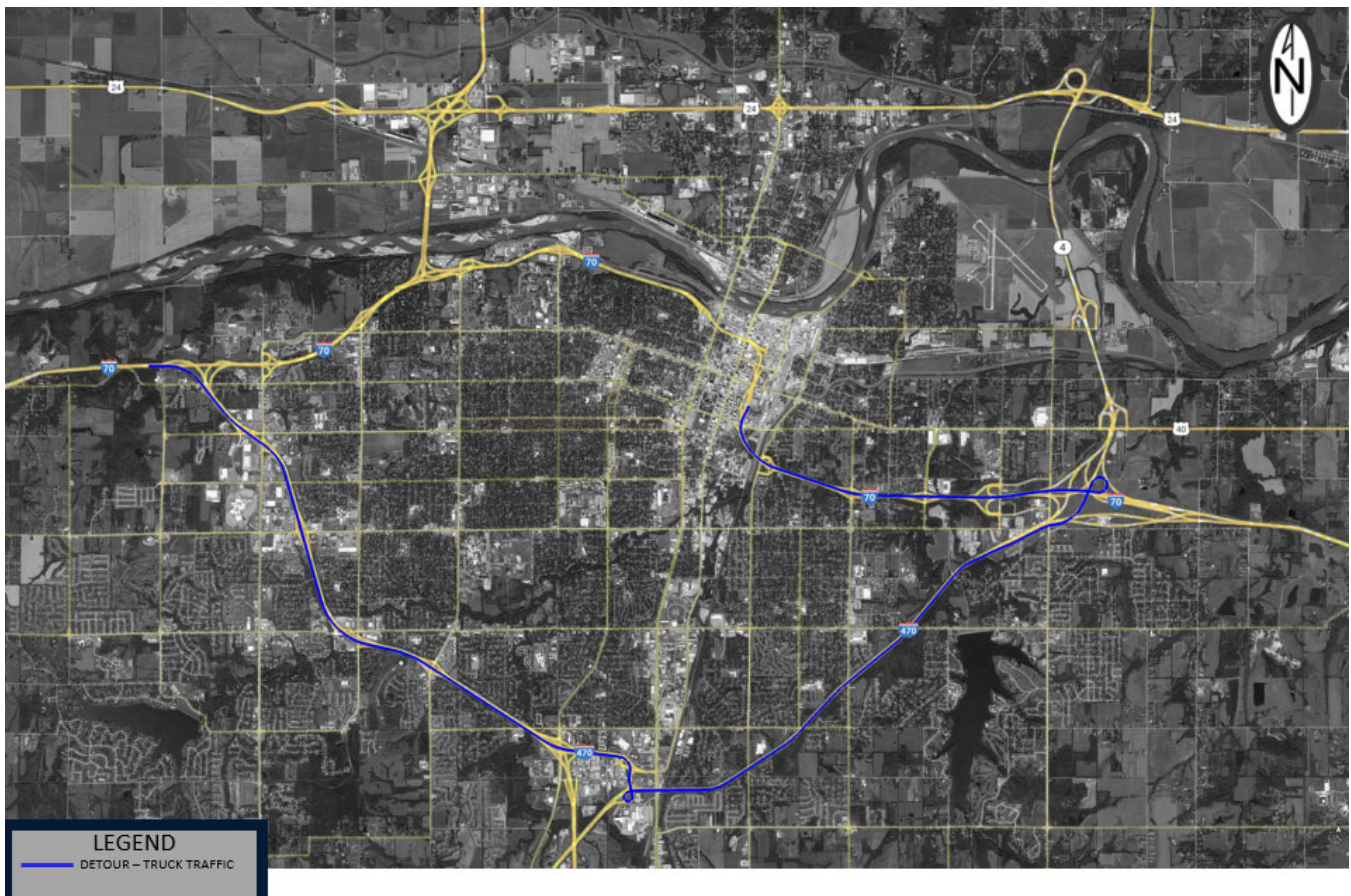
What are the impacts to First Street and Sixth Street during construction?

First Street will close at Polk Street and Harrison Street eliminating the Topeka Boulevard connections. Closures will be early in 2025 and remain permanent. The new westbound on-ramp to I-70 and eastbound off-ramp from I-70 will connect directly to Topeka Boulevard. First Street west of Topeka Boulevard also will close during 2023 for City of Topeka storm and sanitary sewer relocations.

Sixth Street will remain open during construction and be available for use. It is not impacted by the scope of the project.

Is there a plan to handle truck traffic?

Yes, there is a truck detour route as shown below. We will work with the American Motor Carrier Association to help educate drivers in advance of the project. We also plan to work with law enforcement to make sure the detour is enforced.



What are the impacts to downtown businesses?

The construction plan allows for access to downtown businesses during the project. Additionally, with construction beginning in 2025 and continuing through 2026, businesses can expect a boost in local spending. For every dollar spent on infrastructure, roughly three are gained in the local economy. The project contractor and subcontractors will need places to stay, eat and purchase supplies.

How does this project tie into the City of Topeka's plans for bicycle and pedestrian connectivity along Kansas Avenue?

The City of Topeka is planning more bicycle and pedestrian features in the Kansas Avenue area, including a grant-funded conversion of one southbound traffic lane to a two-way bicycle lane across the Kansas Avenue Bridge. The project design team is working very closely with the City of Topeka to analyze how to get the best balance for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists in that area.

I understand the interstate will be three lanes starting at MacVicar Avenue. How far east will those three lanes go?

The three-lane section of I-70 will stretch between MacVicar Avenue and Topeka Boulevard. Aside from that section, the interstate design currently includes only two lanes. The project design allows for expansion and additional lanes in the future, if needed.

Why is there a large separation between the lanes of I-70 through the viaduct?

The project builds two lanes going in each direction across the viaduct, and the project design provides for future expansion to three lanes in each direction if needed. The additional lanes would go to the inside, which requires the extra space for potential use in the future.

How much existing property will be impacted by this project?

For this project, the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) will acquire 41 properties, of which 29 are occupied. Twelve of the properties are parking lots and vacant lots.

Are there historic properties within the project footprint?

One building in the area, 124 S.W. Harrison, will remain in place because it is deemed historically significant due to its architectural style.

What are the plans for aesthetics associated with the project?

The aesthetic focus is on the viaducts and retaining walls and how they tie into design elements seen throughout downtown. Design options are still under consideration, and nothing is finalized at this time.

What design elements will be below the viaduct?

There has been discussion of potentially utilizing the area beneath the future viaduct as open space, and that is an ongoing discussion between federal, state and local partners. Local partners with a concept and funding source will work with the City of Topeka, and the City will bring the concept to KDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for approval. General guidelines from FHWA include prohibiting anything directly under the viaduct that is combustible, which would include a parking lot where a vehicle could remain. Food trucks using that area or camping will not be allowed because of the fire risk.

What is the plan with Second Street underneath the existing I-70 viaduct bridge between Kansas Avenue and Topeka Boulevard?

Second Street will remain open from the west to Jackson Street. The project team plans to remove the existing viaduct, patch the holes in the existing Second Street where the piers are now, and then that roadway will remain open to Jackson Street and closed from Jackson Street to the east.