



NEWS RELEASE

VirginiaDOT.org

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VDOT OFFERS TECHNOLOGY TOOLS AND SUGGESTED DETOURS AHEAD OF WEST VIRGINIA INTERSTATE 77 PAVING

BRISTOL— Using technology provided by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and following a suggested detour instead of your GPS may save you time this summer on Interstate 77 northbound in Virginia.

An extensive paving project begins Thursday, May 17 in West Virginia on I-77 north and southbound near the Virginia border. A northbound lane closure will be in place during the project, as well as the rerouting of trucks off I-77 at exit 1, through the Town of Bluefield, and back on I-77 at exit 9 in Princeton.

Paving in West Virginia may cause traffic backups into East River Mountain Tunnel.

“Safety concerns prohibit VDOT from letting stopped traffic build up inside the tunnel,” said VDOT Bristol Traffic Engineer Brian Holt, P.E. “When traffic builds up, our tunnel staff will stop traffic outside of the tunnel entrance until the back-ups clear.”

With the anticipation of frequent traffic stops comes the inevitable possibility of major traffic delays northbound. Weekend traffic, especially during the summer months, has the potential to back up significantly.

“If motorists can alter their trips so that you are traveling Monday through Thursday mornings or early afternoons, delays could be lessened,” Holt said.

Motorists can also download VDOT’s 511 app (iPhone or Android) to monitor road conditions. The system uses traffic speeds (green – moving without issues, yellow – slowed, red – moving very slow, and black – stopped) to give motorists information about potential delays.

Additionally, there are multiple cameras along the I-77 corridor to allow motorists to view traffic in real time.

There is also an opportunity to detour to avoid potential delays, especially for truck traffic.

VDOT suggests trucks avoid I-77 and access Route 460 directly:

- From North Carolina on I-77 north and from points north of Roanoke on I-81: travel I-81 to Exit 118 at Christiansburg to access Route 460 north to West Virginia Exit 9 in Princeton.
- From Tennessee on I-81: take I-81 north to Exit 13 in Abingdon to access Route 11 north, to Route 19 north at Claypool Hill, following Route 19/460 to Bluefield/Princeton.

“A route we ask trucks to absolutely avoid is Route 52, this route is extremely curvy and cannot accommodate tractor-trailers,” Holt said. “Cars can detour using this route, but the route cannot accommodate trucks.”

Beginning the weekend of May 18 and every weekend for the life of the project (Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. until 8 p.m.), VDOT will have Safety Service Patrol assisting motorists from mile marker 50 near Big Walker Mountain Tunnel to mile marker 66 at East River Mountain Tunnel. (Additional information regarding VDOT's Safety Service Patrol and the services they provide: <http://www.virginiadot.org/travel/safetypatrol.asp>)

VDOT's 24-hour Customer Service Center is available at 1-800-FOR-ROAD (1-800-367-7623) to address motorists' questions. Follow @VaDOTBristol for traffic updates.

For information regarding WVDOT's paving project, visit www.wv511.org or download the WV511 Drive Safe app.

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