

s Work zones increase as I-85 widening continues

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The right-hand lane on Interstate 85 Southbound from Bullsboro Drive will be closed Monday through Thursday from the Bullsboro exit to mile 45.

The two-mile closure will be in effect from 4 a.m. to 4 p.m. all four days.

The lane closure is part of the widening of the interstate from Bullsboro to Forrest Road, which is near the Meriwether County line. The interstate will get an additional lane on each side for a total of six lanes.

For the most part, the construction zone will be blocked with barrels.

Concrete barriers, such as the ones being used in projects farther north, probably won't be used.

The barriers are used on the Bullsboro to Palmetto, Palmetto to Fairburn projects because the lane under construction is being excavated, and there is a pretty severe drop-off on the other side of the barrier.

For the southside project, though, "the elevation is going to be raised," said Barry Hancock, spokesman for the Georgia Department of Transportation.

"You can build that up without a lot of impedance to the traffic," Hancock said. "Where they are needed, we'll use them," he said of concrete barriers.

A lane closure was also in effect last Thursday, though no DOT notice was issued.

With all the construction going on in the Coweta area, Hancock recommends that motorists check the DOT's "navigator" Web site on a regular basis. At [www.georgianavigator.com](http://www.georgianavigator.com), you can see construction alerts for the entire state.

The project is scheduled to last until Dec. 31, 2009, and is the single biggest contract in DOT history.

"During this construction period, motorists can expect shoulder and lane closures on a continuing basis," Hancock said. "We apologize for inconveniences, but in order to maintain safety and construction schedules, closures such as this are necessary."

Hancock advises motorists to be very careful when they are in work zones.

Work zones can be dangerous for motorists and construction workers. Last week was National Work Zone Safety Week.

"Although we are grateful that in 2006 Georgia DOT did not have a single employee killed in a work zone, we cannot forget the 56 employees who have been killed in work zone accidents since 1973," said DOT Commissioner Harold Linnenkohl.

"A major factor in work zone accidents is distracted motorists who are not paying proper attention to roadway signage, conditions, equipment and work zones," Linnenkohl said. "The other contributing factor is, of course, speed. Combine these elements with lessened visibility and you have the potential for disaster."

A highway work zone is the most dangerous place for drivers, Linnenkohl said —motorists are 85 percent more likely to be killed than workers. "Therefore, we urge the public to be cautious when driving through these designated areas."

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