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Harbor Bridge Project (HBP) South Interchange Construction Progress: Part II

From beginning to end, the life of a major roadworks project goes through several stages, from engineering specifications on design, environmental impacts, utilities, structural planning and construction, connectivity, demolition, traffic control, and maintenance. In August, we completed three significant traffic switches around the IH 37 and SH 286 South Interchange to advance progress towards the future tie-in of US 181. Numerous HBP teams successfully collaborated to execute the intricate traffic movement involving the following events. 1) Shifting northbound SH 286 traffic onto the newly constructed detour to Staples Street and US 181. 2) Opening the newly constructed Northwest Loop Ramp (NWLR) connecting traffic from US 181 and the Bayfront areas to southbound SH 286. 3) A ramp reversal for southbound IH 37 to southbound SH 286 eliminated an inconvenient detour for commuters as work continues on connector ramps and ongoing demolition of existing connector ramps.

Tearing Down the Old to Build the New: Every major demolition, excavation, or heavy haul event presents unique challenges, and the recent HBP traffic switches around the IH 37 and SH 286 South Interchange were no exception. However, commencing the recent tear-down of three existing connector ramps, rerouting traffic onto new detours and ramps, and allowing for continuous traffic flow through a busy interchange was executed effectively, thanks to multi-layers of intensive coordination. Sequencing and planning to avoid inconveniencing live traffic during peak travel hours involved crews working around the clock to capitalize on nightly closures and necessary lane reductions. Demo crews implemented numerous essential safety precautions before commencing activities in the construction zone, including the following examples. Heavy excavation equipment is staged at least 30 feet away from live roadways, and water trucks are on-site to control dust and small debris. Cautious operators constantly monitor for pedestrian activity despite the entire area being roped or fenced off with 'danger signs' posted throughout the construction site.

Ongoing HBP Roadworks: As commuters adjust to temporary and permanent traffic patterns, we ask for vigilance to follow new and temporary signage and to slow down in the construction zones. Construction continues towards rebuilding the well-traveled eastbound and westbound IH 37 frontage roads. Crews are also working around North Beach on paving, concrete barrier movements, ground preparation, and demolition around Burleson Street for an upcoming US 181 traffic shift. In a few weeks, we are excited to open the new Connector Ramp from northbound SH 286 to northbound IH 37 and believe the opening will reveal tremendous progress and improved mobility for motorists navigating the South Interchange.

