

NEWS RELEASE

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U.S. 59 expansion provides safety, economic benefits

After years of discussion and formal planning, an expanded U.S. 59 is now carrying traffic in Franklin County.

The 7.6-mile project is the first of two construction phases that will result in a four-lane, 19-mile freeway between Ottawa and Lawrence. The \$63.5 million Franklin County phase opened to traffic this spring and was the focus of a special event in Ottawa this morning.

“This is an important, ambitious project on a highway that has long been in need of improvement,” said Transportation Secretary Deb Miller. “This project, along with Phase II in Douglas County, will have safety and economic benefits that will last for decades.”

A formal study of expanding U.S. 59 was done in 1997 following years of discussion about how to improve the road. Phase I construction began in 2007 and includes 20 bridges, a 40-acre wetlands mitigation project and construction of a site that will eventually be used as a Kansas Highway Patrol weigh station.

Phase II construction in Douglas County began in 2008 and is expected to be completed in late 2012. Total construction cost of both phases is \$167 million. It is funded under the 1999 Comprehensive Transportation Program.

“Improvements of this scale are expensive and can’t be done without the buy-in of citizens and business leaders and the commitment of political leaders,” said Secretary Miller.

“That broad support has allowed Kansas to build projects such as the U.S. 59 expansion and develop one of the best highway systems in the nation.”

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