

Old I-40 gets back on track

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GREENSBORO — State highway officials hope to have Interstate 40 completely returned to its old route through Greensboro before winter, once all the signs are replaced.

The conversion will be a smaller job than it might have been because the state Department of Transportation stopped changing original route signs several months ago, when officials grew worried that rerouting I-40 on the newest stretch of the Greensboro Urban Loop had not been a good decision.

“When we started getting complaints from motorists, we put that contract on hold,” said Mike Mills, DOT’s divisional engineer for the Greensboro area.

DOT decided to make the change because of excessive traffic noise along the new western loop, and because drivers and some emergency responders had trouble following the new route for I-40, Mills said.

“Motorists who were not used to the area were having problems,” Mills said. “It’s difficult trying to read all those road signs going as fast as you’re going through there.”

The speed limit on what has been Business 40 for the past seven months will remain at 55 mph for several miles east of Four Seasons Town Centre.

Mills said that many commuters and other drivers familiar with the Triad continued using I-40’s original route all along, because it is more direct than the bypass. It’s about five miles shorter than taking the Urban Loop around Greensboro, he said.

“If you’re commuting to Burlington from the Gallimore Dairy Road area, that’s 10 miles a day,” he said.

Initial reports about the changeover were wrong in one respect, Mills said: The new section of Urban Loop will be designated Interstate 73 only, not Interstate 840 as the loop is numbered on two of its northern sections.

He said the road will still get heavy use from drivers on I-73 headed north and south of Greensboro, and from local drivers using it to get around the city more efficiently.

In addition, the new section of loop will be an efficient bypass for traffic on U.S. 421, allowing it to avoid congestion around Martin Luther King Drive in southern Greensboro, Mills said.

The newest segment of the loop covers 7.7 miles between I-40 and Interstate 85 southwest of town. It opened in February.

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