

Ramp Jam? Oh, never mind

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August 1, 2013



This flyover ramp, photographed in May, is part of the Wilshire segment nearing completion. Photo/Metro

Remember the [epic closure of the Wilshire Boulevard ramps](#) to the 405 Freeway, heralded as “Ramp Jam” and “The Rampture” and promising long-running, round-the-clock closures of eight ramps at one of the nation’s busiest intersections?

With three of the new ramps now completed and a 90-day closure set to begin this month to finish a fourth, Metro says that extended shutdowns of the remaining ramps won’t be needed after all.

The new plan, to complete all of the ramp work with only half of the pain by the end of this year, is an upbeat development in a project that’s been beset with [deadline and cost issues](#). The project as a whole, which is adding a new 10-mile northbound carpool lane and other improvements to the 405, is currently expected to be virtually completed by mid-2014.

The final 90-day Wilshire ramp closure—of the eastbound Wilshire on-ramp to the northbound 405—is set to begin August 22. It represents the last shutdown of its kind required to complete the ambitious Wilshire ramp portion of the project, although intermittent nighttime closures will take place to finish the job. The new Wilshire configuration includes sweeping flyover ramps and safer, faster-moving lanes to separate entering and exiting traffic.

In addition, project officials have determined that previously scheduled long-running closures of the Santa Monica Boulevard on- and off-ramps to the 405 will no longer be needed. Those closures had been expected to last between 7 and 14 days.

At UCLA, where [foreboding about Ramp Jam](#) had run high, there was a sense of pleasant surprise about how things have turned out.

“It’s definitely been better than we expected,” said Renée Fortier, UCLA’s executive director of events and transportation. “And we really appreciated the flexibility of Metro in working with us to make sure that the ramp closures worked with some of the special events that we’ve had.”

“Compared to the Sunset ramp closures, we’ve heard hardly any complaints,” she added. “It has actually gone pretty smoothly and we haven’t heard a whole lot from the UCLA community.”

Keeping the existing eastbound Wilshire off-ramp from the northbound 405 open while the new one was under construction proved to be a crucial decision in terms of keeping traffic moving smoothly to the campus, said Dave Karwaski, UCLA’s senior associate director for planning, policy and traffic systems. That’s because 33% of the university’s employees come from the south—the largest single geographic cluster—making that off-ramp key to the morning commute, he said.

Kasey Shuda, the Metro construction relations manager on the project who appeared in this [video](#) last year to explain the extensive Wilshire ramps work, said that the original predictions of long-running closures on multiple ramps had been set aside once detailed design and work plans had been completed. Officials decided that only the northbound ramps needed to be constructed from scratch; the southbound ramps are being improved and modified but don’t require complete rebuilding. And the end is in sight.

“Three out of four flyovers are open,” Shuda said. “We’re pretty close to finishing now.”

As for the project as a whole, there’s still plenty of work—and disruption—ahead. Starting Saturday, August 3, for example, the Sunset off-ramp of the northbound 405 is [closing for 120 days](#).

Since construction started in 2010, the 405 Project has dished up two [Carmaggedons](#) that went off without a hitch and a Ramp Jam that never really materialized, along with countless less-publicized detours, closures and daily annoyances. Understandably, a certain fatigue has set in.

At UCLA, Fortier said, “I think that people would like it to be over already.”

Posted 8/1/13

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