

A really long goodbye to Wilshire ramps

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This Metro rendering shows what the Wilshire flyover ramps will look like when completed.

Carmageddon, as the whole world knows by now, came to a happy, early [close](#). Now it's time to start thinking about the [405 Project](#)'s next big closure: the Wilshire Boulevard ramps in Westwood.

Sometime this fall, two Wilshire on- and off-ramps to the 405 Freeway will be closed for 90 days. That work will be followed by a series of closures of the other Wilshire ramps, each expected to last from 14 to 90 days. (There are eight ramps in all, and they will be worked on two at a time.)

The end result should be sweet: modern, swooping [flyover ramps](#) that will make it easier to navigate the notoriously jammed intersection.

But getting to that point may be considerably less so, in the view of residents of neighborhoods around the construction.

"That's going to be the next shoe to drop," said Steve Resnick, president of the Westwood Homeowners Association. "The 405 closure, as it turned out, was just the opposite of what was expected. It was terrific. The feeling is that this could be much worse."

The tentative schedule for the project says the ramps are set to close in October, but project officials say the work is actually likely to begin in November. The ramps that will be closing first are the westbound Wilshire on-ramp to the northbound 405 and the northbound 405 off-ramp to westbound Wilshire.

It's all part of a massive, \$1.034 billion project, set to finish in 2013, that will add a 10-mile northbound carpool lane to the 405 along with other improvements such as the flyover ramps at Wilshire.

There are also concerns at UCLA. The closures will have a "significant impact on traffic congestion and commute

patterns in and around Westwood,” Renée A. Fortier, Executive Director, UCLA Events & Transportation, said in a statement. She said the university is working with project officials to minimize “cut-through” traffic on the campus, particularly around Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center. It also plans to take steps to publicize the closures in advance and to encourage students and employees who live north of the Sepulveda Pass to join existing rideshare programs.

Adding to the trepidation about the upcoming ramp closures is that utility relocation work will be taking place at the same time on Sepulveda Boulevard—the designated [detour route](#).

“It is our goal to keep Sepulveda open with 2 lanes in each direction as much as possible,” said Kasey Shuda, acting community relations manager for the project.

Even so, people in the Westwood Hills neighborhood are bracing for congestion, said Debbie Nussbaum, who represents the area on the project’s community advisory committee.

“In our little neighborhood, we’re very concerned. When things get backed up, people start looking for shortcuts—even when there aren’t any,” she said. “The Mulholland Bridge went pretty smoothly, but at most that was going to be 53 hours. This is 90 days, 24/7. People can’t stay home for that length of time.”

Shuda said the project will bring in traffic control officers to help keep things moving along the detour route as the ramp closure gets underway. Officials also will be using changeable message signs to get the word out to motorists approaching the area and will keep a close eye on signal timing on affected streets. And they’re taking suggestions from the community. (The next [meeting](#) is scheduled for Aug. 18.)

For her part, Nussbaum would love to see a special park-and-ride lot designated during the closure, with free rides offered on buses headed into and out of the area. And she’s hoping that some of the public-spirited mindset that applied during Carmageddon will kick in among those who need to travel to Westwood each day.

“Even if they carpooled a couple of days a week, that would make a difference,” she said. “Unless people do something voluntarily, it’s going to be pretty gridlocked over here.”

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