

Steering clear of Mulholland Bridge

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The Mulholland Bridge was partially demolished during “Carmageddon” in July. Metro photo by Gary Leonard

They were looking for a sign—and they’re getting one.

Five signs, to be exact: moveable electronic message boards that will warn of congestion ahead on the Mulholland Bridge.

As classes get underway next week at schools along the Mulholland corridor, residents and parents alike are bracing for some of the worst morning rush hour traffic in memory. Last year, eastbound traffic had a dedicated right turn lane on the bridge. This year it’s gone, and traffic has been reduced to a single lane in each direction.

That’s because even though [Carmageddon](#) has come and gone (at least the first part), the [405 Project](#) is entering a busy new phase with construction on multiple fronts. The Mulholland Bridge—gateway to numerous schools, serving some 2,700 students in all—promises to be one of the more challenging locations as workers prepare to rebuild the south side of the bridge that was torn down in July.

To help deal with the anticipated tie-ups, schools in the area have added extra buses and are heavily promoting carpooling. And everybody involved is trying to relay this [message](#) to motorists: stay away unless you absolutely have to be in the area.

“Kind of like Carmageddon, we really need to get the word out prior to the event, rather than during the hysteria of being in it,” said Laurie Kelson, who represents the Encino Neighborhood Council on the project’s community advisory council.

“It is going to hit us very hard. We’ve been working for Metro for the past 18 months,” added Robert Woolley, who represents the Mulholland Educational Corridor Association on the 405 Project’s community advisory council. He said that schools in the area have long staggered their start and dismissal times, and are increasing the number of bus routes this year from 9 to 13. Some larger buses also are being used.

At Woolley’s institution, the Mirman School, a quarter of the students will be coming by bus this year—up from 10%-15% last year. Other schools in the corridor include Berkeley Hall, Curtis, Westland and the Stephen S. Wise Temple and Schools, along with the Bel Air Presbyterian Church preschool. American Jewish University also is located nearby.

Ron Macias, a Metro community relations officer, said the message signs have been placed at key intersections in Encino, Encino Hills and Sherman Oaks. The goal is to warn unsuspecting motorists well before they head into the construction zone—and to let longtime commuters know that their alternate routes through the area will likely be more headache than they’re worth.

Macias said traffic officers also will be on hand next week to keep traffic moving in the area. He said a proposal to create a shuttle for students coming from Encino is under consideration.

Next week also brings a nighttime closure of the southbound 405 and the [Sunset Bridge](#) as contractors pour new decking on that structure on Monday, August 29. Sepulveda Boulevard will be closed from Montana Avenue to Church Lane from 10 p.m. on Wednesday, August 31, until 6 a.m. the next day. Details are [here](#).

More disruption can be expected in November, when [long-running ramp closures](#) go into effect so work can begin on flyover ramps at the intersection of Wilshire and the 405.

The 405 Project, which will add a 10-mile northbound carpool lane to the freeway along with other improvements, is set to wrap up in 2013.

“It’s just going to affect a lot of people’s lives for a long time,” Kelson said.

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