

## With contract signed, I-4 construction to begin in early 2015

Posted: Sep 10, 2014 6:52 PM EDT

Updated: Sep 10, 2014 6:52 PM EDT

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ORLANDO, Fla. (WOFL FOX 35 ORLANDO) -The Florida Department of Transportation has a signed contract with I-4 Mobility Partners for \$2.3 billion to construct four toll lanes down the center of Interstate 4, with construction set to begin in early 2015. Frank O'Dea with FDOT says design work will begin this month on the project, and once construction begins, expect the contractors to work on the entire 21 mile stretch right away, beginning with sound walls similar to what you see along State Road 408.



"Where we put the sound walls up it will help shield the communities from the noise that's going to be generated from the construction."

Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer says the sound walls are important, not just to mitigate construction noise, but to give I-4 a new look when the work is complete.

"We're the City Beautiful and it's a quality of life type of issue. I-4 runs through residential neighborhoods all through downtown Orlando, and it's important that we have an aesthetically appealing roadway."

Frank O'Dea with the FDOT says the entire District 5 staff and its construction partners know just how difficult it will be for travelers once the 21 miles worth of work begins.

"It's not going to be painless. We are not trying to pretend it will be. It's like trying to renovate your kitchen, but having to cook dinner in it every night. Most of the time when you do a home renovation the people leave. We are trying to renovate your kitchen while you are serving lunch."

There will be I-4 lane closures every night. O'Dea says the FDOT will do as much as possible to ease the pain.

"While we tear up I-4, we can't close any of the lanes down, so a lot of the work is going to be

done at night to minimize the impact to the traveling public... obviously, a project of this size, there are going to be times when an interchange will have to be shut down. We're going to do as much advance notice. Weeks, not hours, weeks of notice on major closures."

The work will begin with the sticky I-4 and 408 interchange and extend out in each direction from there. O'Dea says

there are options for people that just will not be able to stand all the cones, lane shifts and delays.

"There will be some coping, SunRail. That was the whole reason SunRail was envisioned years ago was for the reconstruction of I-4. Also there's alternate routes that you can use so we would suggest that."

Once the work is done in 2021, O'Dea is confident those 2 tolled express lanes in each direction will get use.

"We know they are going to embrace the concept. It's already started down in South Florida. What we are trying to do is offer people choices. SunRail will be a choice. I-4 the general use lanes will be a choice, or if you are in a hurry, you can choose the express lanes and you are going to be given a more reliable travel time."

Once the work wraps up, more construction on i-4 is set to begin. Eventually the plan is to have toll lanes running in each direction from the Osceola County line to Dirksen Road in Volusia County. It will be at least 2030 before all of that work will be finished.