

# I-4 Ultimate work starting Sunday at Maitland interchange



Earth moving begins in Maitland on the I-4 Ultimate construction project begins in earnest.

By **Dan Tracy** Orlando Sentinel *contact the reporter*

- Maitland

Right eastbound lane closing Sunday night  
Barrier walls to be installed Sunday night

The first of thousands of concrete barrier walls will be set in place Sunday night next to the **Maitland** interchange — ground zero for the Interstate 4 work that will last at least six years.

The right eastbound lane will be closed at 9:30 p.m. and likely will not reopen until the 7 a.m. morning rush hour to allow workers to place the 5,000-pound units. The same lane may be closed nightly until May 22.



Construction is beginning on the I-4 Ultimate project with earth removal at the Maitland interchange originally put there to help fill a sinkhole. April 10, 2015. (George Skene, Orlando Sentinel)

Drivers should be careful in the area, construction officials said. Although the lanes will remain 12 feet in width, they likely will appear narrower because of the barriers.

"Keep your eyes on the road. People need to pay attention," said Steve Olson, a spokesman for the state Department of Transportation, which is overseeing the project.

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The 32-inch-high walls, which will cover less than a quarter-mile, will separate traffic from workers and heavy machinery. Crews are leveling the grassy hill that goes by the nickname Mount Maitland to make way for new on- and off-ramps and additional lanes.

Large trucks will be ferrying the excavated soil from the area and, periodically at night, will cross the eastbound on-ramp from Maitland to I-4.

The removal of the hill — actually dirt piled on top of a grout-filled sinkhole — represents the first major and widely visible job of the so-called I-4 Ultimate, the \$2.3 billion rebuild of Metro Orlando's busiest highway.

"This is construction. This is what most people consider construction," Olson said.

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Lots of work already has been going on with the massive project, but almost all of it behind the scenes. Much of it has to do with planning and schedule-making devised by scores of engineers and office personnel at a Maitland office complex just off I-4.

Martin Neiswander, co-owner of Seminole Precast Manufacturing, also has been hard at work. He has had his employees making barriers since October at his 30-acre production facility in DeBary. They are more than halfway through a \$6.42 million contract to create 39 miles of barriers.

Neiswander said he will start shipping 135 barriers to Maitland Sunday afternoon. One flatbed truck can carry nine of the walls.

Within a couple of weeks, more barriers will be sent to the eastbound exit ramp of Ivanhoe Boulevard on the north end of downtown Orlando. That ramp is being closed permanently, Olson said.

By June, walls will be showing up at the State Road 408 interchange with I-4, at the south end of downtown. That is considered the most critical task for the Ultimate because the work is so complex and will take years to complete.

The state, at its I4Ultimate.com website, has a camera trained on the intersection to allow people to monitor construction and the likely backups that will occur there. It can be seen at: <http://i4ultimate.com/construction-info/live-construction-camera/>

Neiswander said his company will be churning out a seemingly "endless" supply of barriers in coming weeks.

"We'll go project by project," he said.

Eventually, the barriers will line the entire 21 miles of the Ultimate construction zone, from State Road 434 to the north to Kirkman Road to the south. Walls also will be placed on roads feeding into I-4.

All told, four tolled express lanes will be added to the middle of I-4, along with the rebuild of 15 major interchanges and the widening, replacement of construction of 140 bridges.

In addition to those sites, some crews already are clearing away trees, shrubs and other greenery from along I-4. Much of the deadwood is being dumped on a lot along Wymore Road, just north of Lee Road. The debris will be turned into chips.

I-4 carries as many as 200,000 cars and trucks during a typical workday through downtown.

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