

Major Downtown bridge to close for over 2 years
Thousands will need detour from Front St.

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The Front Street Bridge spanning Interstates 70/71 in Downtown Columbus will close for more than two years starting Saturday as crews build a replacement.

The construction, part of the 70/71 Downtown Ramp Up project, is expected to conclude in the spring of 2025, a year before the overall project is scheduled to be completed, according to the Ohio Department of Transportation.

The route is the major access between the Brewery District and Downtown, forcing thousands of travelers to find an alternate route. The state's recommended detour will funnel South Front Street traffic one block to the east onto South High Street via Main Street and Sycamore Street.

Matt Rootes, co-owner of Matt and Tony's on Short Street in the Brewery District, doesn't think the bridge replacement will cost him any business, but he harbors some concerns because the closing could impact the Shadowbox Live theater and Kroger a few blocks from his establishment.

"That's where we get our draw from," Rootes said. "People are going to have to figure out how to get around" the bridge. Matt and Tony's usually sees an influx of Buckeye fans after Ohio State football games, and Rootes said he will have some idea of the closure's effect on his business once he sees the size of Saturday's post-game crowd.

The closure is the latest stage in the 70/71 Downtown Ramp Up project, a \$480 million undertaking designed to shift traffic patterns and improve safety along the highways in the heart of Columbus, which is one of the busiest — and most dangerous — routes in Ohio.

The project, which began in the summer of 2010, involves 19 stages and has dramatically impacted traffic patterns on the southeast side of Downtown, near Nationwide Children's Hospital, where Interstates 70 and 71 separate.

Other ongoing phases include the intersection of the interstates with Route 315. Workers are now building a ramp that takes drivers from the eastbound lanes of Interstate 70 onto Mound Street. Piers for that bridge are under construction now. pcooley@dispatch.com

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