

The New Farm Lane: Bridge to the Future

Frequently Asked Questions

Last updated August 21, 2008

Introduction

The Farm Lane Underpasses project will lower Farm Lane under two existing railroad crossings, the Canadian National (CN) line north of Service Road and the CSX line just north of the commuter lot (Lot 89). In addition, Farm Lane will be widened from two lanes to five, between Mt. Hope Road and Wilson Road, along with the addition of new sidewalks and bike paths.

With recognition and gratitude to Michigan Sens. Debbie Stabenow and Carl Levin and Rep. Mike Rogers, who helped secure funding for the project, it is a joint partnership between the Michigan Department of Transportation and Michigan State University. MDOT and MSU officials also are working closely with the Capital Area Transportation Authority to minimize disruption to CATA bus service, particularly on Route 32 which serves the commuter lot and Spartan Village on Harrison Road. The commuter lot on the corner of Mt. Hope Road and Farm Lane will remain open during construction, with pedestrian, vehicular and bus traffic rerouted.

We hope the following frequently asked questions help guide you through this intricate and interesting project that will improve travel on one of the university's main thoroughfares.

Construction details/timeline

Q. What is being done?

A: Besides widening the roadway and adding bike paths and sidewalks, this project also includes: drainage improvements, including building new pump houses and detention basins; landscaping; the reconfiguration of the commuter lot (Lot 89); and construction of two new service drives to be located just west of Farm Lane.

Q: Why Farm Lane?

A: Farm Lane was selected over Harrison or Hagadorn roads because there is less development along Farm Lane that would require accommodation. Access to the many businesses along Harrison and Hagadorn roads would have to be maintained, making the underpass construction far more complicated.

Q: Why are we building underpasses instead of overpasses?

A: Both designs were considered before the underpass design was chosen as the best option. Going under the existing tracks results in less of an impact to the campus community. With the underpasses, the road will dip about 14 feet below each bridge. If the overpass design was selected it would have required the bridge to be about 32 feet high and would have eliminated access from Farm Lane to Service Road.

Q: How much does this cost and how is it being paid for?

A: The total construction cost is \$34.7 million. The total project cost, which includes professional services, work by MSU and construction contingency, is \$42.5 million.

Approximate dollar amounts and sources:

\$22.5 million (MSU)

\$20 million (funding partners including the Federal Highway Administration, State of Michigan Jobs Today Program, and the CN and CSX Railroads)

Q: How is federal funding secured for a project like this?

A: Great appreciation is due to the Michigan Senators and District Congressman who helped garner the funding to make The New Farm Lane a reality. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, Sen. Carl Levin and Rep. Mike Rogers were instrumental in supporting and then securing funding from the highway spending bill approved by President Bush in August 2005.

Q: Who's managing the project?

A: MSU is partnering with MDOT to manage the project. Because the Federal Highway Administration is providing part of the funding, MDOT's involvement is essential as only state or local road agencies can administer federal money.

Q: Who's the contractor?

A: The prime contractor is Posen Construction out of Shelby Township, Mich.

Q: How tall are the cranes I'm seeing peeking over the trees?

A: The tallest crane will be 200 feet from street level.

Q: Why is so much soil being hauled away? How much exactly?

A: Due to the fact we're building underpasses, the road is being lowered to accommodate the railroad bridges. Therefore, soil removal is necessary. The total amount of earthwork on the project is 282,000 cubic yards.

Q: If the road is being lowered under the bridges, is flooding a concern?

A: The project includes a pumping system that is designed to handle the worst storm event that would be expected in a 100-year period.

Q: How long will this project last?

A: Farm Lane and the affected intersections (Trowbridge and Service) are slated to reopen in summer 2009.

Traffic impacts

Q: What are the detour routes for vehicles?

A: The following roads are part of the designated detour routes in and around campus: Harrison Road, Mt. Hope Road, Hagadorn Road, Wilson Road, Bogue Street, Red Cedar Road, Trowbridge Road and Shaw Lane.

Q: Where do I find maps or information about detour routes?

A: Construction detour maps reflecting the Farm Lane project and other construction projects on campus may

be found online at www.construction.msu.edu. Click on “Construction Detours.” These maps are printable to either post or carry with you.

Q: Are there plans to modify traffic flow on the detour routes?

A: Traffic studies were completed and a significant amount of work was done on local roads and intersections during the summer of 2007 to maximize the capability of those roads and help traffic flow as smoothly as possible. The detour routes will continue to be monitored by the appropriate jurisdictions including the city of East Lansing, the Ingham County Road Commission, and MSU.

Q: Should I expect delays?

A: Yes. As other roads accept the traffic displaced by the Farm Lane and Service Road closure, you should plan for potential delays, especially during rush hour and special events on campus.

Commuter lot (Lot 89) impacts

Q: I normally park in the commuter lot (Lot 89) and walk and/or bike north to campus on Farm Lane. What do I do now?

A: Riding the bus into campus is the recommended means of getting to campus during fall and spring semesters as no pedestrian or bicycle traffic is allowed through the construction site for safety reasons. For CATA routing and rate information, please see the CATA section below.

Q: Will the commuter lot be open the entire construction period?

A: Yes. However, the entrances off Farm Lane are now closed.

Q: I would like to continue walking/biking to campus, is there an alternate option besides CATA?

A: Yes. The walkway through the Ag Expo grounds is open for pedestrians/bicyclists. The entrance to the grounds is in the northwest corner of Lot 89 and will take you west to Crescent Road, then Harrison Road north to campus. Please note, however, that because CATA is the official detour option for pedestrians and bikers, the alternate Ag Expo route will not be paved or lit.

Q: What if I already purchased a commuter lot parking pass but have decided I would prefer not to park there anymore due to the construction?

A: The MSU Police Department Parking Office will refund a prorated amount for the commuter lot permit. Contact the Parking Office at 517-355-8440 for details. Remember that the commuter lot permit is good for a 50 percent discount in many of the pay lots.

CATA bus information

Q: I've never used the bus before. What does it cost to ride?

A: As a student, you have several options depending on how much you plan to ride CATA. Cash fare for students is 60 cents per ride. If you only need bus service to and from the commuter lot (Lot 89), commuter lot passes (good only on Route 32A/32B weekdays from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.) are available for \$20 per semester or \$33 for both semesters. They can be purchased from the MSU Police Department, Shaw Hall, the Union Central store in the Union building or CATA. If you plan to ride more than the commuter lot route, you might

consider a semester pass for \$50. This is good for unlimited rides on all CATA routes per semester. Semester passes are available online at www.cata.org, at most residence halls, Union Central store, MSU PD and CATA. CATA also offers a 31-day pass for \$18. Regular fares are \$1.25 per ride or \$35 for an adult 31-day pass.

Q: What are the bus routes?

A: There are several routes serving the commuter lot during fall and spring semesters: Routes 32A and 32B travel to the commuter lot weekdays 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Service is available every 7 to 10 minutes. Route 35 serves the lot weekdays every 20 to 26 minutes from 7 p.m. until 2:22 a.m. and on weekends every 26 minutes from 9 a.m. until 2:22 a.m. Beginning at 2 a.m., the Night Owl service begins and runs all night – until 7 a.m. on weekdays and 9 a.m. on weekends. You must call CATA at 432-8888 to request this service.

Q: Can I bring my bike on the bus with me?

A: CATA buses feature free bike racks so you can bring your bike along for the ride. Starting in August, two bike racks were added to the CATA station on Shaw Lane to offer additional bike parking.

Q: What if I already purchased a commuter lot bus pass but have decided I would prefer not to park there anymore due to the construction?

A: Your commuter lot pass can be refunded only by CATA, regardless of where you purchased the pass. Your refund will be prorated. Your pass must be returned to CATA’s Finance office at 4615 Tranter St., Lansing, MI 48910. You will be refunded in check form which CATA will mail to you. Contact CATA at 394-1100 for more information.

Q: Have rates increased because of this project?

A: No. Effective April 7, 2008, CATA implemented a cash fare and pass price increase on all its services. This had nothing to do with the Farm Lane Underpasses Project.

Q: How long will it take me to get to campus from Lot 89 due to construction?

A: To be safe, plan 20 minutes total for your trip from Lot 89 to campus. Route 32A travels from the lot to Hagadorn Road and into campus via Service and Bogue to the MSU-CATA Transportation Center. Route 32B travels from the lot to Harrison Road and into Spartan Village before continuing on Harrison and Shaw Lane to the MSU-CATA Transportation Center.

About the railroads

Q: How many trains travel through campus each day?

A: About 60 trains cross campus each day — some spanning two miles. The consequent delays total up to five hours.

Q: Will the trains stop or slow down during construction?

A: At the site of the underpasses the trains will slow down only 5 to 10 mph during construction. To allow trains to continue through the sites at all during underpasses construction “shoo-flies” are being built. Learn more about shoo-flies below.

Q: What’s a shoo-fly?

A: A “shoo-fly” is the term used to describe the temporary railroad tracks being built to accommodate train traffic during construction of the underpasses. They are being built just south of the existing two railroads.

Q: How many railroad bridges will there be when this is done?

A: Two. One at the CN railroad (northernmost track) and one at the CSX railroad.

Q: What will the clearances be under the bridges?

A: The minimum underclearance for the new bridges is 14 feet, 9 3/8 inches for the CN bridge and 14 feet, 9 1/8 inches for the CSX bridge.

Q: Are there any unique aspects of the bridge design?

A: Yes. Because of constructability issues associated with underground utilities at Service Road and Farm Lane the depth beneath the bridge could not be maintained per the requirements of the CN Railroad. To overcome this standard the bridges include “sacrificial beams.” These concrete beams span the length of the bridge to provide an additional layer of protection for the bridges should something come in contact with the underpasses. The final design incorporates the beams as a feature.

Q: What’s the “design load” of the bridge?

A: “Design load” is the maximum load a system is designed to handle. The design loading for the bridges is based on the current American Railway Engineering and Maintenance-of-Way Association specifications, using Cooper loading as a unit of measurement. [Added info for bridge enthusiasts: A Cooper E80 is equivalent to a train engine weighing more than 1 million pounds. The CSX bridge is designed to hold two side by side. A Cooper E90 is equivalent to a train weighing nearly 1.3 million pounds. The CN bridge is designed to hold two side by side.]

Q: How big are the steel girders needed for the bridges? How much do they weigh?

A: The main girders for the CN bridge are 12.5 feet deep and weigh approximately 173,000 pounds each for the CN bridge. The main girders for the CSX bridge are 11.25 feet deep and weigh approximately 160,000 pounds each. The total weight of the steel for the CN bridge is approximately 850,000 pounds while the total weight of the steel for the CSX bridge is approximately 800,000 pounds.

Q: Where are the historic lanterns coming from that are seen on the bridge renderings?

A: The historic lanterns are custom manufactured by MSU’s Physical Plant. These lanterns will be sized 25 percent larger than the lanterns on North Campus.

Baker Woodlot/environmental impacts

Q: Will Baker Woodlot be impacted by construction activity?

A: No. Part of the project involves shifting Farm Lane to the west to avoid impacts to Baker Woodlot.

Q: Can I still visit/traverse Baker Woodlot during Farm Lane construction?

A: Yes. You may access Baker Woodlot from Bogue Street on the lot’s eastern border. You may not enter or exit it off Farm Lane. The Baker Woodlot entrance on Farm Lane is fenced and gated as no pedestrian or bicycle traffic is permitted the duration of the project.

Q: Will the trees removed during construction be replaced?

A: Yes. The new landscape plan will include: 239 shade trees, 145 evergreen trees, 235 ornamental trees, 1,461 perennials and 1,981 shrubs.

Q: Is there a storm water management plan?

A: Yes. The storm water management plan is designed with a “treatment train” approach to cleaning storm water before discharging it into the storm drainage system. The detention area consists of three basins. Water is pumped from under the bridges and discharged to the first detention basin. This cleans what is called the “initial flush” of sediments, pollutants and greases/oils. It then pools and seeps through the soils, is collected by drain pipes and discharged to a second basin, which repeats the same process as the first basin. The water seeping through the soils is then collected again in drain pipes and discharged to a larger third basin and ultimately to the storm water drainage system. In addition to the detention basins the project will have rain gardens along Farm Lane to clean storm water.

Q: Have teaching or research opportunities been developed as part of this project?

A: The storm water management plan has been developed with a focus on education, providing the academic community with opportunities to teach on design means and methods, water quality management, and real-life monitoring techniques.

Q: How will the site be landscaped?

A: The landscape plan will provide large plant masses at the bridge abutments to control soil erosion and minimize maintenance. Additionally, the landscape passing Baker Woodlot south of Service Road will give the feeling of driving through the woodlot, not just beside it. Tree species that match those in Baker Woodlot will be clustered and grouped to give a naturalized image.

Food Safety & Toxicology/greenhouse parking

Q: I work in the Food Safety and Toxicology Building. How will I access my building and Lot 53 with the intersection of Trowbridge and Farm Lane closed?

A: A temporary drive has been built starting at the intersection of Wilson Road and Farm Lane. It will provide access to the greenhouse parking lot (Lot 47) along Farm Lane as well as Lot 53.

Q: I have an event at the Horticultural Demonstration Gardens/4-H Children’s Garden. Can people still park in Lots 53 and 101?

A: Yes. You will be able to access Lot 53 via the temporary drive from Wilson Road (see above) and you can access Lot 101 from Bogue Street to Service Road or Service from Hagadorn Road.

Special event parking and traffic

Q: I normally park in the commuter lot (Lot 89) when I visit MSU for special events. May I still park there?

A: Yes. The commuter lot will remain open throughout construction. CATA bus service to and from the lot resumes August 18, 2008. Expect delays, however, to accommodate traffic and construction detours.

Q: What other visitor parking lots are available besides Lot 89?

A: Parking meters provide the most traditional, short-term, close-in parking at MSU. Generally, meter timing is set to provide rapid turnover so that as many visitors as possible may use that space during the course of a business day. The rates and durations of each meter are posted on them. Times and schedules vary. Be sure to check the meter before you walk away. There are more than 650 meters on campus, many located in

residence hall loops. If you "feed" the meter and it malfunctions, do NOT park there. You may receive a ticket. Malfunctioning meters are no parking zones.

Visitors may also park in the visitor pay lots on campus. Several visitor parking lots are available for your parking needs. MSU's interactive campus map (www.maps.msu.edu) allows you to view options and print your own map. Visitor pay lots are Lots 39 (across from the International Center), 62 West (north of the IM Sports West), 63 West (south of the Breslin Center), 79 (south of the football stadium), Ramp 3 (north of the Wharton Center and accessed from Shaw Lane), and Lot 100 (located east of the Clinical Center).

Impact on 2008 football season

Q: I use the shuttle buses when I come to campus for football games. How will they be impacted this season?

A: Shuttle buses for the 2008 football season will still operate from the commuter lot; however, they will be routed to the stadium via Hagadorn Road. *This route will significantly increase the travel time and will likely increase the wait time to board a bus.* Should you choose to use the shuttle, please build additional time into your game-day schedule. The shuttle service will return to its normal route for the 2009 football season and should be more efficient than ever as the delays at the railroad tracks will be eliminated with this project.

Q: What other parking options will be available besides the commuter lot (Lot 89)?

A: Alternate game-day parking is available on a first-come, first-served basis for those choosing not to utilize the commuter lot for parking this season. Please follow the instructions of those directing traffic in order to locate available game-day parking. During past seasons, parking has frequently been available at the Communication Arts Building Ramp (located at the northeast corner of the Trowbridge Road/Red Cedar Road intersection), the Shaw Lane Ramp (located on Shaw Lane between Farm Lane and Bogue Street), and the Wharton Center Ramp (located directly east of Wharton Center and accessible from both Shaw Lane and Wilson Road).

Q: I would like to continue walking/biking to campus from Lot 89 to the games, is there an alternate option besides the shuttles?

A: Yes. The walkway through the Ag Expo grounds is open for pedestrians/bicyclists. The entrance to the grounds is in the northwest corner of Lot 89 and will take you west to Crescent Road, then Harrison Road north to campus. Please note, however, that because CATA is the official detour option for pedestrians and bikers, the alternate Ag Expo route will not be paved or lit.

Q: How can I access the handicap parking in Lot 48 (off Trowbridge Road)?

A: Access to handicap parking in Lot 48 will be from the west only via the Trowbridge Road/Red Cedar Road intersection during this season. Access will not be available from the east via Farm Lane due to the road closure.

Q: How can I get more information?

A: Visit www.homefootball.msu.edu for up-to-date game-day information. Direct parking-specific questions to 517-355-2221.