

Las Vegas Sun

# Officials reach milestone on Hoover Dam bypass

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Blasting on U.S. 93 near Hoover Dam is complete, marking a major milestone in the widening of 15 miles of the highway in Arizona and the construction of the Hoover Dam bypass bridge.

The Arizona Department of Transportation said construction crews performed 38 blasts using more than 172 tons of explosives, causing traffic delays since September on the main highway connecting Las Vegas and Phoenix.

“We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their patience as they traveled this stretch of highway over the last few months,” Arizona District Engineer Mike Kondelis said in a statement.

Work continues on the bridges, overlooks, a trailhead and wildlife crossings as Arizona creates a four-lane divided highway, expected to open later this year when the bypass bridge is complete.

Nevada has also widened part of U.S. 93 on its side of the dam in preparation for the bridge opening.

The bypass is expected to save a significant amount of travel time. A 6.3-mile trip that now averages nearly 17 minutes will be cut to 5.5 miles that can be traveled in six minutes, at 55 mph.

Travel times along that stretch — often congested with tourist traffic — can be more than 30 minutes.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, some traffic has been banned on the dam for security reasons. Before the Sept. 11 attack, semi-trailer trucks were about 18 percent of the traffic on the road. Since then, more than 2,100 trucks per day are being detoured 23 miles through Laughlin.

Those trucks are expected to return to U.S. 93 once the bridge opens.

The improvements to U.S. 93 also have increased interest in the possibility of building a new interstate route to connect Las Vegas and Phoenix.

Motorists traveling to Arizona from Las Vegas can get project updates by calling 1-888-887-0565 or visiting [www.az511.gov](http://www.az511.gov).

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