



Jane Byrne Interchange Construction Update

The Illinois Tollway Authority held a public meeting in early March to update commuters on the status of the Jane Byrne Interchange. Popularly known as the “Circle” interchange, this junction between the Dan Ryan (Interstates 90/94) and the Eisenhower (Interstate 290) expressways has been undergoing a massive makeover, its first since its creation in the 1950s.



Artist’s rendition of renovated Jane Byrne Interchange, facing west. Map source: Illinois Transportation and Highway Engineering Conference.

Starting in 2013, the overhaul project was initially estimated to have been complete by 2018, but the project went through several changes and is now estimated that the construction will end by 2022. Out of the 35 contracts for the interchange’s renovation, 17 have been completed, and eight more due for completion before the end of 2019.

Source: [Illinois Tollway](#). [IDOT](#). [Chicago Tribune](#).

Refurbishing overpasses near the interchange were also included as part of this project. Almost all of the overpass construction is complete, with two more bridges due for completion by the end of 2019. Improvements for retaining walls and water mains are also in progress.

IDOT noted key challenges that make the project last many years. These included the fact that the Dan Ryan and Eisenhower Expressways are very busy and need to be kept open instead of doing a full closure. Additionally, with a separate project occurring at Interstate 55 and Lake Shore Drive, both the Interchange construction and the Lake Shore Drive project had to consider the impact of construction on each other and adjusted their construction schedules accordingly.



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Last Month’s Traffic Digest February, 2019

Fatal crashes: **35***
16 fewer than normal†

Total fatalities: **37***
21 fewer than normal†

* Provisional, subject to change
Source: IDOT
† Based on 2012–16 five-year means

Widespread Midwest Flooding Swamps Illinois

The St. Patrick’s Day weekend was all but festive for parts of northern Illinois, where record-breaking floods inundated cities and prompted road closures throughout the region.

Machesney Park reported a flood level of 14.32 feet at the Rock River, breaking the previous record of 14.30 feet. Several other municipalities, including Rockton, Byron, and Rockford observed major flood levels.

The Midwest flood, spanning from Nebraska and Kansas to Wisconsin and Illinois, occurred due to “a combination of high soil moisture, frozen ground, quick snow melt, and rainfall”, according

Source: [NWS Chicago](#). [WREX](#). [RR Star](#). [KHQA](#). [NOAA](#).

to the National Weather Service Chicago office. Indeed, 2018 ended with greater-than-average annual total precipitation, and the heavy snow in early 2019 resulted in broad snow accumulation, that led to rapid melting as temperatures warmed to welcome springtime conditions. Furthermore, the colder-than-average winter left some areas of the ground frozen to a depth of 2 feet.

These precipitation and freezing patterns allowed the precipitation to drain into rivers faster than the rivers themselves flow, causing backup and flooding. The NOAA predicts a high probability of moderate to major flooding sometime between March and May for areas near the Mississippi and Rock rivers.

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Trooper-Related Crashes Persist

Despite the efforts of the Illinois State Police (ISP) to crack down on crashes related to troopers performing traffic stops or assisting in crashes, the number of squad car collisions of these types has surpassed one dozen.

ISP has rigorously been enforcing Scott's Law, the "Move Over" law that requires vehicles to move over to the other lane when they see vehicles parked on the shoulder with their hazard or emergency lights on. Statewide, there have been more Move Over citations and warnings issued this year than in the previous year to-date. At the same time, however, there have been more Scott's Law squad car collisions in 2019 than in all of 2018.

On January 12, ISP Trooper Christopher Lambert was struck at a crash site after a vehicle fatally struck him and his squad car. Governor Pritzker and ISP urge all drivers to slow down for stopped vehicles and move over to protect the safety of those who need to stop on the side of the road.

Source: ISP. [WGN. Illinois.gov](http://WGN.Illinois.gov)



Illinois State Police Pursue and Arrest Wanted Suspect

by THE ILLINOIS STATE POLICE

Springfield, IL- On March 7, 2019, at approximately 9:15 AM Illinois State Police (ISP) officials responded to the Extended Stay America Hotel in Rockford, Illinois to assist with reports of an Active Shooter.

At some point during the ongoing incident at the hotel, the suspect fled the area in his vehicle. At approximately 10:45 AM, ISP District 6 Troopers spotted the suspect traveling on Interstate 39 at Milepost 8, and a pursuit ensued; during the pursuit, the suspect displayed a rifle. The pursuit lasted approximately thirty minutes at speeds well in excess of 100 mph in inclement weather and adverse road conditions. The pursuit came to an end on Interstate 55 at Milepost 132.5, after which ISP officers on scene struck the suspect's vehicle in an attempt to terminate the pursuit for the safety of the public.

After the suspect's vehicle was struck, the vehicle came to a rest in a ditch. The suspect exited and re-entered the vehicle, before proceeding to barricade himself inside of the vehicle for approximately 6 hours. Additional ISP officers, including ISP SWAT personnel and ISP crisis negotiators, as well as various other law enforcement agencies assisted in various aspects of the incident including the following: Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Marshal Service, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms

Source: Illinois State Police.

and Explosives, Illinois Secretary of State Police, Illinois Department of Natural Resources Conservation Police, Logan County Sheriff's Office, Sangamon County Sheriff's Office, McLean County Sheriff's Office, Springfield Police Department, Bloomington Police Department, and the Lincoln Police Department.

At approximately 5:00 PM, the suspect was taken into custody without incident. The suspect is being transported to a local area hospital for non-life threatening injuries he sustained during the crash. The suspect is currently in ISP custody, and will eventually be turned over to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"First and foremost, we would like to extend our deepest condolences to the McHenry County Sheriff's Office and the family of Deputy Keltner," stated ISP Acting Director Brendan F. Kelly. "The men and women of the Illinois State Police, including responding Troopers from District 16, District 1, District 15, District 6, District 8, and District 9, all responded with seamless professionalism alongside the law enforcement of this state. ISP's SWAT team in particular showed incredible tactical restraint, bravery and boldness today. This dark day has come to an end, and this defendant can now be brought to justice," concluded Acting Director Kelly.

McHenry County I-90 Interchange Project Begins

Roadwork began to construct McHenry County's first interchange at the junction of Interstate 90 and Illinois State Route 23 south of Marengo. The project, estimated to be complete before 2020, includes a brand new set of onramps and offramps, connected by two roundabouts instead of sets of stop signs or traffic signals. A third roundabout will also be created at the intersection of Illinois State Route 23 and Harmony Road just north of the interchange.

In 2017, the Illinois State Route 23 bridge overpassing Interstate 90 was refurbished ahead of this

Source: Patch.

interchange project. Portions of the state route will be widened. A detour is planned along Illinois State Route 23 between Harmony Road and Maple Street, and a contra-flow lane may be situated during off-peak hours.

During the construction, a 45-MPH work zone speed limit is enforced, and the Illinois State Police reminds drivers to move over for stopped vehicles, such as construction vehicles, with their hazard lights on.

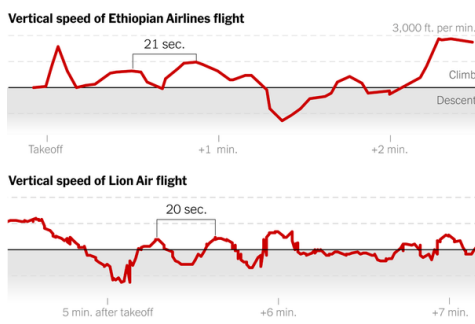
Boeing Heavily Scrutinized After Second Deadly Crash

The FBI is now involved in a criminal probe that investigates Boeing's role in certifying 737 MAX 8 planes to fly. The heavy investigation comes after a deadly crash in Ethiopia killed all its occupants just after taking off from Addis Ababa on March 10. Over three dozen nations, including the United States, moved to ground Boeing 737 MAX 8 model airplanes, and potential evidence seems to be emerging connecting this crash to a previous deadly Boeing 737 MAX 8 crash.

The train of events of the Ethiopian Airlines crash were reported to be eerily similar to that of another Boeing 737 MAX 8 crash that occurred in October 2018, in which a Lion Air flight crashed into the Java Sea shortly after taking off Jakarta, killing all occupants. The flight data recorder and cockpit voice recorder are currently being analyzed in France.

The Ethiopian Airlines crash happened only five months after the Lion Air crash.

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) was one of the last of a group of more than three dozen nations whose aviation agencies or state airlines announced to ground the Boeing 737 MAX 8 airplanes. While



Vertical speed of Ethiopian Airlines and Lion Air flights. Image source: CBS.

many agencies, including the Ethiopian Airlines and the Ministry of Transportation in Indonesia, grounded their 737 MAX 8 planes immediately, it was only after the FAA reported “clear similarities” between the crash in Addis Ababa and the one in Indonesia that they decided to ground 737 MAX 8s in the U.S., nearly three days after the deadly crash.

Although officials did not explicitly state what exactly the “clear similarities” were, they did note that the erratic ascent-descent motions suggested that the pilots of both flights struggled to maintain control of the plain. Both airplanes crashed only minutes after takeoff and had similar flight patterns. A jack screw, a device that helps planes raise or lower its nose, was set to the “dive” position for the Ethiopian Airlines plane, while initial theories

suggest that an automated system in the Lion Air plane was set in the diving position.

New developments of the Lion Air crash investigations reveal that an off-duty pilot helped divert an incident on the 737 plane a day before it crashed. Furthermore, there were additional safety features that Lion Air declined to purchase because they cost money and were not mandatory.

Boeing's training sessions on the differences between 737 MAX 8 and previous 737 planes were only 56 minutes long and on an iPad. Government officials affirmed that subpoenas were issued on FAA certification process records related to the 737 MAX 8 planes.

Meanwhile, Boeing announced a software update for the MAX 8 airplanes, as well as a mandate for the safety feature that Lion Air did not purchase for their fleet. On March 22, Indonesia cancelled a \$5 billion deal that would have purchased additional MAX 8 planes from Boeing.

An Atlas Air cargo plane that crashed near Houston, killing its three occupants, is not believed to be related to the Lion Air and Ethiopian Airlines crashes.

Source: CBS [1] [2]. NBC. CNN [1] [2]. The New York Times [1] [2]. [National Transportation Safety Bureau](#).

IDOT Hosts Disadvantaged Business Enterprises Conference

TRAFFIC AND BUSINESS

On March 25 and 26, IDOT hosted the Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) Conference in Springfield. The conference provided workshops and networking opportunities to DBE firms and contractors from across the state.

IDOT Acting Secretary Osman Omar states that the conference aims to help DBEs develop skill sets to increase their ability to work on federally funded highway contracts.

IDOT believes that conferences like these will help develop equal opportunities for stronger relationships between the government and small businesses regardless of the socioeconomic status of their shareholders and workers.

Source: IDOT [1] [2].



TRAFFIC SAFETY INITIATIVES

In the Spotlight!

Police Skeptical about Safety Surrounding Legal Cannabis

Illinois residents are bracing for—or eager for, depending on their stance—the legalization of recreational cannabis. With a new elected governor open to options for legalizing the drug, concerns are growing for its effect on safety. Particularly concerned are law enforcement agencies across the state that worry that legalization will lead to higher traffic crash rates.

According to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, common symptoms of the effects of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the prevalent depressant agent in cannabis, include delayed reaction times, difficulty in hand-eye coordination, anxiety, and decreased cognitive abilities. However, the extent of the effects depend from person to person, and these symptoms may not be sensible even for some with high concentration of THC in their system.

This, though, is not to deny that cannabis has an effect

on one’s ability to drive. Traffic fatality rates increased along with cannabis user rates in Colorado and Michigan, where recreational cannabis use is allowed. Investigations from the January crash that killed Illinois State Police Trooper Christopher Lambert during a crash investigation along I-294 revealed that the driver at fault had THC in his system. The effects of THC can last anywhere from two to 10 hours.

However, enforcing DUI of THC is difficult because of how varied its effects are. Furthermore, it is not as easy as a breathalyzer to determine the THC concentration of a subject. The difficulties in enforcing limits on cannabis use while driving is part of the reason police agencies are reluctant to greenlight recreational cannabis. The only certainty is that the legal landscape of recreational cannabis will most likely change, and that law enforcement will quickly need to line up available options to maintain road safety.

Source: [News Gazette](#). [Patch](#).



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Distracted Driving Awareness Week in April

The St. Patrick’s Day DUI enforcement campaign had just ended, but Lake County maintains the momentum by enforcing distracted driving in the coming month, with an additional \$22,011 approved by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to put emphasis on distracted driving violations during the Lake County Sheriff’s Office’s Sustained Traffic Enforcement Program.

Increased enforcement for distracted driving reflects IDOT’s ambition to discourage “anything that takes your attention away” from undermining safe driving practices. In fact, this goal is so ambitious that it expects any law enforcement participants to report at least half of citations related to distracted driving.

Residents who express a strong desire for free will and self-expression may find such enforcement practices overprotective, restrictive, and possibly invasive, but there is nothing free or liberating about causing injury or death because of the contents on the screen of a smartphone.

Nationally, about 10 percent of traffic fatalities involve distracted driving, according to 2016 data from the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA). However, these statistics may be an underestimate, since not everyone will truthfully admit to using phones while driving.

Distracted Driving Awareness Week is the week of April 21 through 27.

Source: [Chicago Tribune](#). NHTSA. [IDDAW](#).

Year-To-Date Fatal Crash Snapshot

March 25, 2019

142 Fatal Crashes*
148 Fatalities*

On this day last year:

208 Fatal Crashes*
227 Fatalities*

79 Below
Fatalities change

* Provisional, subject to change
Source: IDOT