

COVID-19 not affecting ArDOT projects in Northwest Arkansas

by Jeff Della Rosa (JDellaRosa@nwabj.com) April 7, 2020 3:49 pm 633 views

Share Tweet



The COVID-19 pandemic has broadly impacted the U.S. economy. So far, it has yet to delay any major road construction projects in Northwest Arkansas.

Randy Ort, assistant chief of administration for the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ArDOT), said COVID-19 has not affected any of ArDOT's projects so far, and the weather is having a greater impact. Whether COVID-19 will impact them is unclear.

"Some of these decisions about continuing work will be up to the contractors as business owners," Ort said. "They have to consider the health and well-being of their employees, and since the governor stated it is now considered a 'community spread' situation, widespread exposure is now a bigger concern."

Asked if the state would be flexible with contract completion dates as a result of the virus, Ort said, "There's no doubt we have to be flexible, but I can't define what that will end up looking like." The state can charge penalties, known as liquidated damages, or give incentives based on when the contractor completes a project.

The Interstate 49 interchange project at Exit 85, which spans Rogers and Bentonville, is set to be completed in mid-2021, Ort said, adding that the completion date has been adjusted. Apac-Central Inc. started work on the \$26.9 million project in October 2018, and it initially was expected to be completed this summer. However, the contractor's work has been impacted by six utility companies that are working to move their lines, leading to the revised completion date.

Work to complete the Bella Vista Bypass in Arkansas also continues. Kolb Grading is completing 8.7 miles of the northbound lanes of the bypass. The \$27.5 million project started in January 2018 and should be completed late this year. Emery Sapp & Sons Inc. of Columbia, Mo., is building 2.6 miles of the bypass, from Benton County Road 34 to the Missouri state line, and the new interchange at U.S. Highway 71B in northern Bentonville. The \$102.11 million in projects started in fall 2019 and should be completed in late 2020 and late 2021, respectively.

