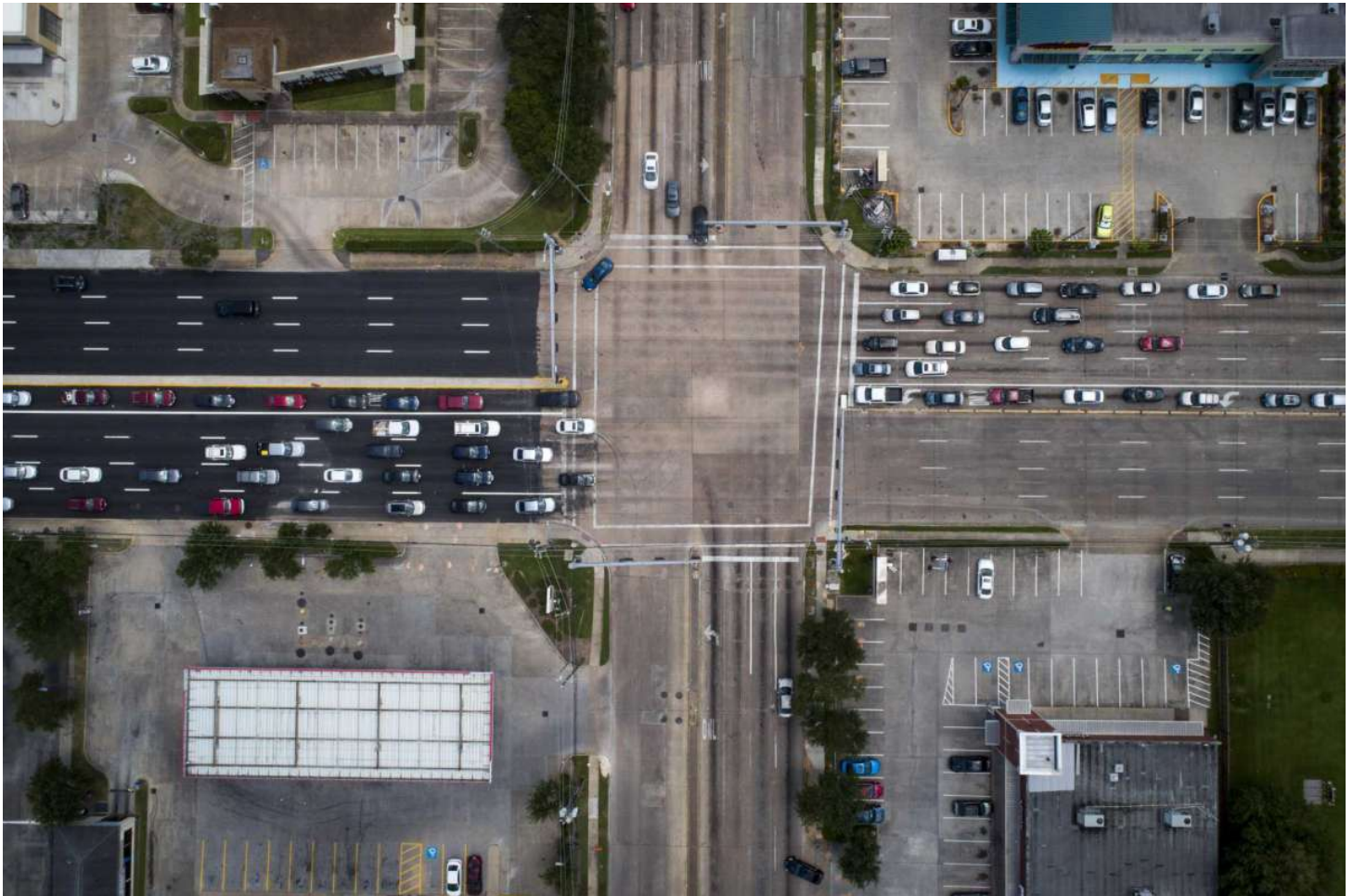


LOCAL // TRANSPORTATION

With less traffic, workers cut Westheimer repaving time in half

Dug Begley

July 8, 2020 | Updated: July 8, 2020 10:32 p.m.



The contrast between a newly resurfaced Westheimer Road and the old surface is visible at the intersection with Dairy Ashford, seen July 8, 2020, in west Houston. A project to resurface Westheimer is wrapping up six months ahead of schedule because COVID cleared the way for faster work.

Photo: Mark Mulligan, Houston Chronicle / Staff photographer

Without any of that pesky traffic in the way, road crews made quick work of repaving a long stretch of Westheimer and are zeroing in on completion of the 13-month job in half the time.

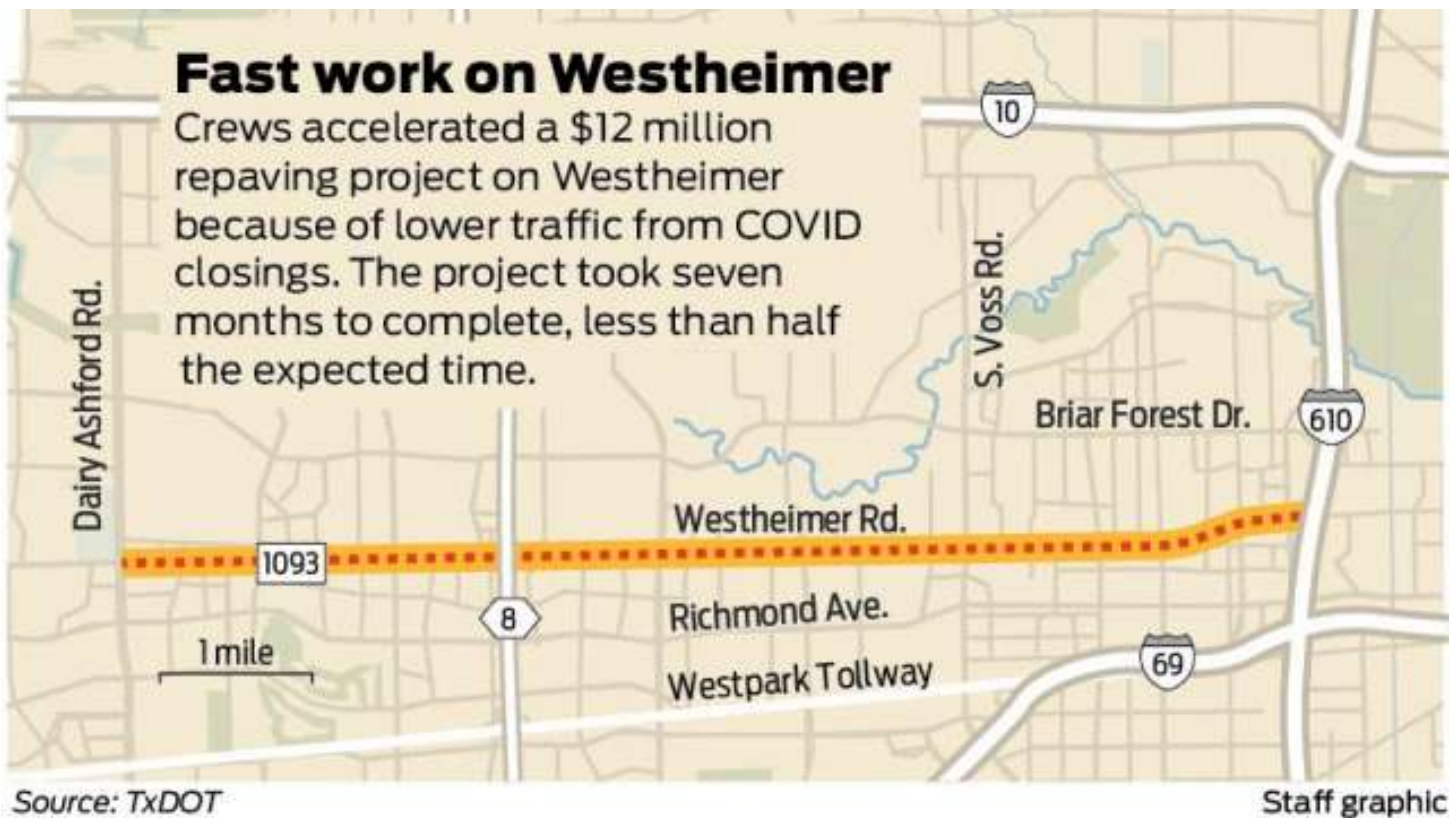
Workers will spend the next few weeks painting lane markings and finalizing other details, but finished the asphalt work along Westheimer from Loop 610 to Dairy Ashford in the past two weeks, Texas Department of Transportation officials said.

“We were able to finish that job in in six to seven months’ time,” said Eliza Paul, district director for TxDOT in Houston, noting the ability to work around the clock and close numerous lanes at a time radically accelerated the work.

Crews are expected to wrap up in August, said Raquelle Lewis, spokeswoman for TxDOT in Houston. The \$12 million project did not have an incentive for finishing early, Lewis said.

Officials called the speedy completion an example of making the best of a bad situation as the COVID pandemic shutdown businesses and kept many folks in their homes — significantly reducing traffic on area streets and freeways. Around the region, overall traffic volume dropped to around 60 percent of the typical workday commute in many areas and by more than half on weekends. Even as some businesses reopened in May, traffic remained between 10 percent and 20 percent below normal.

OUT OF CONTROL: Despite a drop in crashes, Texas sees rise in speed-related road deaths during the pandemic



TxDOT is planning a \$12 million project to rebuild Westheimer, also FM 1093, from Loop 610 to Dairy Ashford. Construction is set to begin in March.
 Photo: Houston Chronicle

On major streets such as Westheimer, that lower traffic volume allows for more aggressive lane restrictions during the day – when work typically would not be scheduled to avoid gridlock.

Westheimer is by many measures Houston’s busiest street, carrying 67,000 vehicles per day east of Dairy Ashford. Only state highways and interstates in the region carry more cars and trucks daily.

TxDOT and Angel Brothers Construction, which won the job to resurface Westheimer, adjusted closure plans in April to take advantage of the decreased road demand. Rather than shifting some of the most intensive work on nights and weekends, crews moved to a 24-hour schedule, enabling them to plow through the project by closing lanes for longer periods of time and for greater distances. That allowed for much faster repaving by eliminating the need to open and close short segments and work practically block-by-block along the 8.8 mile route.

For drivers, however, the payoff is enormous even as many said Westheimer hardly was



The contrast between a newly resurfaced Westheimer Road and the old surface is visible at the intersection with Dairy Ashford, seen July 8, 2020, in west Houston. A project to resurface Westheimer is wrapping up six months ahead of schedule because COVID cleared the way for faster work. Crews with Angel Brothers switched to a 24-

“I’m happy they can take advantage of the time,” said Dan Ruppert, 55, who lives in Uptown and often drives Westheimer. “It’s why I think they should do more work at night if they can.”

Related Stories



CURRENTLY READING

With less traffic, workers cut Westheimer repaving time in half

TEXAS

BY DUG BEGLEY, DIEGO MENDOZA-



TRANSPORTATION

BY DUG BEGLEY, STAFF WRITER



TRANSPORTATION

BY DU

Gov. Abbott's mask order met with mixed reactions from Texans

Metro's mask mandate could be moot

**on S
not :**

FREEWAYS AND FAIRNESS: Critics of I-45 project call for protection of vulnerable communities

Similar to Westheimer, a number of major TxDOT projects are benefiting from decreased traffic during the pandemic, Paul said.

At Loop 610 and Interstate 69 just south of the Galleria, the reduced traffic allowed crews to accelerate construction and get painful road closures out of the way so they could hang beams for the rebuilt interchange.

The effect on the 2023 opening day of the massive interchange project, however, remains unclear as months of work remain.

With traffic still low, major closings are scheduled this weekend at the interchange, including a total closure of Loop 610 in both directions between Richmond and Westpark Tollway and ramps from I-69 northbound to Loop 610 northbound and southbound Loop 610 to I-69 in both directions.

dug.begley@chron.com

Sign up for the Morning Report newsletter

Get all the news you need to start your day in Houston

Enter your email

SIGN UP

By subscribing, you agree to our [Terms of use](#) and acknowledge that your information will be used as described in our [Privacy Policy](#).

TOP

[Our Company](#)

[Interest Based Ads](#)

[Newspaper Delivery Safety Procedures](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

[Privacy Notice](#)

[Advertising](#)

[Your California Privacy Rights](#)

[Careers](#)

CONTACT

[Subscribe](#)

[Customer Service](#)

[e-Edition](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Archives](#)

[Newsroom Contacts](#)

HEARST *newspapers*

©2020 Hearst
