

New McHenry bridge over Stanislaus will be done sooner than planned. Now the bad news

[BY JOHN HOLLAND](#)

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Drone footage shows McHenry Avenue bridge north of Modesto near completion

Construction is nearing completion on a new McHenry Avenue bridge over the Stanislaus River north of Modesto, California, in September 2019. The final steps will require traffic delays of up to 30 minutes. BY [ANDY ALFARO](#)

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Construction is nearing an end on a wider McHenry Avenue bridge over the Stanislaus River, but the final steps will mean major traffic delays.

Drivers can expect waits of up to 30 minutes starting in early October because of installation of traffic signals at McHenry and River Road.

This will last two or three weeks, said Alex Chetley, deputy director of engineering for the San Joaquin County Department of Public Works. He provided an update Tuesday night to the Modesto City Council.

The nearest river crossings are in Riverbank, three miles to the east, and Ripon, six miles to the west.

“While we’ve made every effort to minimize the duration of this conversion, the fact remains that drivers will experience significant delays while the signals are being installed,” Chetley said.

The \$32 million project will replace a two-lane bridge completed in 1959 for what was then light traffic between the Modesto and Escalon areas. Now, nearly 13,000 vehicles use it on an average day, Chetley said.

The new bridge will have four lanes over the river for motor vehicles. The project also will create more room on the north and south approaches for bicycles and for turning and merging cars.

Myers & Sons Construction of Sacramento is doing the work on a 1.1-mile stretch connecting San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties. The funding comes from local, state and federal sources.

Construction started in May 2017 and was scheduled to take until mid-2020. Chetley said it will be completed this autumn because of faster than expected work on a smaller irrigation canal bridge that is also part of the project.

The intersection had long been controlled by four-way stop signs that led to backups at commute time. A temporary roundabout was installed during construction, allowing traffic to move through slowly.

Some drivers have urged that the roundabout be permanent. Chetley said it is impractical because of both the available space and the future traffic volume.

The upcoming traffic delays are on top of those that have accompanied the project from the start. Drivers can get updates at improvementchenry.com.





Expansion of the McHenry Bridge over the Stanislaus River is almost complete in Modesto, Calif., Sept. 5, 2019. ANDY ALFARO AALFARO@MODBEE.COM