

Krista Klaus
Reporter



NOVEL INTERCHANGE IN KANSAS CITY AREA WILL BOLSTER DEVELOPMENT

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The Missouri Department of Transportation is set to break ground Nov. 1 on the first so-called diverging diamond interchange in the Kansas City area.

Engineers say the \$13 million interchange — at Botts Road and Missouri Highway 150 — will increase and improve traffic flow to a south Kansas City area slated for heavy development in the next two years.

The General Services Administration is building a [1.5 million-square-foot campus](#) for the National Nuclear Security Administration just north of the planned interchange. The former Richards-Gebaur Air Force Base, under [redevelopment as an intermodal freight facility](#), is just southeast of the bridge.

The diverging diamond, or DDI, is a rare form of interchange first built in France. It will require the two directions of traffic on the non-freeway road to briefly cross to the opposite side on both sides of the bridge at the highway.

Jim Cross, senior vice president of development for CenterPoint, which is developing the intermodal facility in partnership with Kansas City's Zimmer Cos., hopes the DDI will help attract tenants to the freight hub, as well as to nearby properties.

"Good infrastructure in cities brings clients," Cross said.

On Tuesday morning, MoDOT met with general contractor Loch Sand and Construction, based in Maryville, Mo., for an update about the project. MoDOT construction inspector Mike Winckler said the first phase of construction will involve shutting down Botts Road north and south of the interchange to construct bridge abutments.

Crews will spend the winter months adding fill to the site and raising the overall elevation by 15 to 25 feet, said Jerry Wilson, vice president of operations for Loch Sand.

Wilson said the project will employ about 200 people, including subcontractors, during the next two years.

“Everyone involved is glad to have the work,” Wilson said. “It will open up the area for development. There are some areas on the north side of M-150 that are pretty rugged.”

CenterPoint’s Cross said the bridge is essential in an on-demand world.

“It is clear clients want to get on the highway. They don’t want to go through busy streets, and it’s safer,” Cross said.

MoDOT has plans to build two additional diverging diamond interchanges in Kansas City — one at the intersection of Interstate 70 and Woods Chapel Road, and the other at the intersection of Interstate 435 and Front Street.

The Front Street DDI originally was slated to be the first of its kind in the nation, but it was temporarily shelved in 2007 favor of the [kcICON project](#) to improve Interstate 29/35 near downtown Kansas City, MoDOT spokesman Steve Porter said. Bids on the city’s two additional DDI bridges are expected to be let in the spring of 2011.

MoDOT opened the nation’s first DDI interchange in January 2009 in Springfield.

kklaus@bizjournals.com | 816-777-2242 | Twitter: @kristabizkc

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