

Westbound I-70 Twin Tunnels – June 2014

Construction Update

As of May 29, crews have performed 35 blasts inside the tunnel and 20 rock face blasts outside the tunnel. Current estimates indicate it will take about 80 tunnel blasts and 70 rock face blasts to widen the westbound tunnel portal.

Thus far crews have excavated about 420 feet of the tunnel and removed about 8,900 cubic yards of material. Outside the tunnel, about 2,000 cubic yards of material have been removed from the rock face walls above the westbound portal.

To make this type of progress, crews have been working around-the-clock six days a week; a schedule that is expected to continue throughout the rest of the project.

Tunnel crews are making every effort to blast during the early evening hours so they can excavate and haul out blasted materials overnight. Rock face blasting, which federal law mandates must be done during the daytime, is generally being scheduled for late morning or early afternoon times. This provides the opportunity to reschedule the rock face blast for later that same day should the initial blast time not be met for some reason.

Because the blasting schedules can vary, everyone is encouraged to sign up for the Colorado Department of Transportation's text and email alerts to receive updated information. To sign up for these alerts, visit <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/CODOT/subscriber/new?pop=t&qsp=1851>

Reasons traffic might be stopped

For most people who encounter delays along I-70 for work associated with the Westbound Twin Tunnels project, it might not be evident why they are being asked to stop. After all, it is only while traffic is being held that workers can do certain activities along the rock walls above I-70. Once traffic is released, these activities have to stop to help keep drivers safe. As a general rule, there are three types of work being done above the highway that require stopping traffic:

1. Removing loosened materials prior to and/or following a blast
2. Conducting drilling and blasting operations
3. Installing rock bolts and removing mesh from the rock face wall

This summer when rock face blasting is about halfway complete, there will be several days when crew members will scale the rock faces above both ends of the tunnel to remove loose rocks and verify the stability of the remaining rock so blasting work can continue. As was done in April, this work will require stopping I-70 traffic in both directions several times throughout the day. Information on this scaling work will be shared in advance as it is scheduled.



Excavation operations are ongoing in the 675-foot long westbound tunnel bore. While this project is not adding a third lane to westbound I-70, it is widening the tunnel to accommodate future widening.

Summer construction activities

With longer periods of daylight and an increase in summer tourism traffic in store for the next several weeks, people might notice corresponding changes in construction activity. Work could start earlier in the day and extend into the early evening hours as compared to what people might have encountered thus far. Also, with the customary increase in mountain visitors this time of year, there are fewer times when traffic can be stopped for blasting and scaling operations. Unless existing traffic conditions dictate otherwise, crews are generally prohibited from stopping westbound I-70 traffic on Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings and eastbound I-70 traffic on Saturday afternoons and Sundays during the day.