Transportation Secretary Jim Gray Issues Order to Relieve Street Congestion

Removal of damaged deck of Brent Spence Bridge scheduled to begin Saturday

COVINGTON, Ky. (Nov. 18, 2020) – Kentucky Transportation Secretary Jim Gray has signed an order intended to encourage drivers of commercial trucks traveling north on Interstate 71/75 to stick to signed detours while the Brent Spence Bridge over the Ohio River is closed for repairs.

Northbound commercial vehicles heading to Ohio are directed to detour onto I-275 toward alternative crossings. However, some through-drivers continue north on I-71/75 into downtown Covington, creating gridlock on local streets.

“The intention is not to penalize drivers but to prohibit large trucks from clogging local streets, creating traffic hazards and congestion,” Secretary Gray said. “Diverting drivers onto our established detours will keep traffic flowing as smoothly as possible during this limited bridge closure.”

Secretary Gray’s order, which will remain in effect until the bridge is reopened, and which exempts trucks making local deliveries, empowers law enforcement officers to prohibit commercial vehicles from bypassing the detour.

Violators can be ticketed. However, “we’re not looking for penalties,” Secretary Gray said. “We’re looking for cooperation.”

Secretary Gray announced the official order in the course of giving an update on the progress of the project to repair and reopen the Brent Spence, which was damaged in a truck crash and fire last Wednesday, Nov. 11. The Brent Spence Bridge, which normally carries about 160,000 vehicles a day across the Ohio River on I-71/75, has been shut down since.
In less than one week after the crash, a team assembled by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) had inspected the damage, designed repairs and awarded a contract to Kokosing Construction Co. for the emergency project. The contract calls for the bridge to be reopened to traffic by Dec. 23.

“A week ago today, the bridge was on fire,” Secretary Gray said. “But a rigorous inspection after the fire showed the Brent Spence still to be a stout, sturdy structure. And today we are on the verge of beginning construction of the repairs that will return the bridge to public service.”

Project progress to date and upcoming schedule:
- First shipment of steel arrived early Tuesday at staging area in Frankfort.
- Kokosing is mobilizing crews and equipment on the bridge today.
- Saw-cutting of concrete to begin Friday.
- Removal of damaged deck sections to begin Saturday.

Secretary Gray also introduced the KYTC core leadership of the project, all from Department of Highways District 6, Covington: Bob Yeager, Chief District Engineer; Stacee Hans, Project Coordinator, and Cory Wilson, Project Manager.

Lastly, Secretary Gray had this advice for travelers during the period of traffic disruption: “Plan ahead. Plan your drive. Know your route.”

Read Secretary Gray’s official order here. Keep updated on the Brent Spence Bridge repair project here. Follow our Covington highway district, KYTC District 6, on Facebook and Twitter and online here.

A story map for the project can be seen here.