

PREMIUM CITY OF MEMPHIS

I-55 roundabout partially opens to traffic, new bridge next

By [Bill Dries](#), Daily Memphian

Updated: May 07, 2025 2:16 PM CT | Published: May 06, 2025 2:17 PM CT



"Not only are we putting \$1 billion in extra funding for road and bridges, but we put \$85 million in recurring dollars," Gov. Bill Lee said. The state's current approach is a departure from the state's past funding practice of paying as it had the money for road projects. (Mark Weber/The Daily Memphian)

The new Crump Boulevard/Interstate 55 roundabout near Downtown Memphis officially opened Tuesday, May 6 — well, partially.

Access to and from Interstate 55 wasn't open Tuesday evening.

The roundabout, a long-term road project with tentative design work dating back to 2011, separates local traffic from I-55 traffic on the approach to and from Memphis-Arkansas Bridge across the Mississippi River.

The \$111 million project replaces a series of narrow exit and entrance ramps on E.H. Crump Boulevard shared by cars and trucks on what is and will remain a major freight corridor.

“It’s now a proven technique that is being used in these kinds of situations to keep traffic moving and reduce congestion and make things more efficient, faster and safer,” Deputy Gov. and Tennessee Transportation Commissioner Butch Eley said at Tuesday’s ribbon cutting. “We did extensive research and analysis. ... We are confident this is the right fix for this area.”

Gov. Bill Lee, also in town for the event, said the project and others slated for the near future are part of a \$30 billion backlog. He also announced on Tuesday two road projects further east: the widening of Summer Avenue and the widening of I-40 between Germantown Parkway and Canada Road, which are among a slate of 96 road projects across the state this year.

“Not only are we putting \$1 billion in extra funding for road and bridges, but we put \$85 million in recurring dollars,” Lee said. The state’s current approach is a departure from the state’s past funding practice of paying as it had the money for road projects.

“All without raising taxes and without going into debt,” Lee said.

Eley called the old method, relying strictly on gas-tax revenue, as “eat what you kill” because it was based on having money in hand to build.

The Summer Avenue widening that will also replace the Wolf River Bridge has been on the Tennessee Department of Transportation’s list of projects since 1986.

Although it may be different experience for some Memphians, mayor says roundabout creates opportunity

Memphis Mayor Paul Young says the roundabout should also play a part in building communities south of Crump, including the French Fort area.

“I think it creates an amazing opportunity for French Fort, which is an amazing jewel in our city,” he told The Daily Memphian. “It will be good for our community to have more direct access.”



"It's now a proven technique that is being used in these kinds of situations to keep traffic moving and reduce congestion and make things more efficient, faster and safer," Deputy Gov. and Tennessee Transportation Commissioner Butch Eley said at Tuesday's ribbon cutting. "We did extensive research and analysis. ... We are confident this is the right fix for this area." (Mark Weber/The Daily Memphian)

A new interchange was hotly debated in 2011 with some French Fort homeowners concerned about opening up access to a secluded area.

And some early versions for how to make I-55's southbound turn on the border of the subdivision included demolishing some of the homes.

No homes were taken with the roundabout design, and the neighborhood's eastern border overlooking the interstate includes high walls now.

The opening of the roundabout will be followed by construction of a new I-55 bridge across the Mississippi River near the existing Memphis-Arkansas Bridge, which opened in 1949.

The existing auto bridge is scheduled for demolition once the new "America's River Crossing Bridge" is completed.



Gov. Bill Lee said the project and others slated for the near future are part of a \$30 billion backlog. He also announced on Tuesday two road projects further east: the widening of Summer Avenue and the widening of I-40 between Germantown Parkway and Canada Road, which are among a slate of 98 road projects across the state this year. (Mark Weber/The Daily Memphian)

The \$800 million undertaking was announced in July 2024 with funding coming from the Tennessee, Arkansas and federal governments. Tennessee's \$250 million makes it the largest transportation project in state history.

Reid said design work on the new bridge is underway with a tentative opening date in 2030. The roundabout is designed to accommodate a connection to the new bridge.

Young, whose professional training is in city planning, was willing to admit the roundabout and its complex signage is a different experience for Memphis drivers. Mud Island has had a roundabout for decades on the western side of the A.W. Willis Bridge, and some interior Midtown streets also have roundabouts instead of stop signs at intersections.

"It will take some getting used to," he said. "But many of us have experienced it in other cities driving around."

Reid said the roundabouts are becoming more widely accepted across the country.



The new Crump Boulevard/Interstate 55 roundabout near Downtown Memphis officially opened Tuesday, May 6. (Mark Weber/The Daily Memphian)

“Once the public gets used to it, they work really well. One of the big benefits is obviously you don’t have a (traffic) signal anymore,” Reid said. “And you take away conflict points at left turns, which is a huge safety issue. ... They move traffic well, and there is a safety component to them.”

TDOT is currently under development on a similar I-40 roundabout at Airline Road, also Tenn. 205 in Arlington to replace the combination cloverleaf/diamond-shaped interchange.

That roundabout is tentatively scheduled to start construction in the fiscal year that begins July 1, 2026, [according to the TDOT website](#).