



City of Yakima

News Release

Subject: MLK, Jr. Blvd Underpass Opening

Contact: Utilities & Engineering Director Debbie Cook – 575-6120

Communications & Public Affairs Director Randy Beehler – 901-1142

Release Date: Monday, July 21st, 2014

MLK, Jr. Boulevard Underpass Almost Ready for Traffic

The wait is nearly over for drivers wanting to use the new MLK, Jr. Boulevard underpass in Yakima. A **ribbon cutting ceremony** scheduled for **Wednesday, July 23rd** will officially mark completion of the project and the removal of detour signs around the construction area.

Local, state, and federal officials, representatives from the Yakima business community, and other project partners have been invited to attend the **11:00 am ribbon cutting on July 23rd** at the **intersection of 1st Avenue and MLK, Jr. Blvd.** Following the dedication ceremony, a caravan of City vehicles will take the first official trip on the underpass. Yakima community members are also invited to follow the caravan on foot to get a firsthand look at the new underpass.

After the ribbon cutting ceremony, crews will complete final cleanup of the underpass and a section of MLK, Jr. Blvd between 1st Avenue and 3rd Avenue that has been closed since the project began. Later in the day on July 23rd, that section of the roadway and the underpass will be opened to normal traffic.

Construction of the underpass was expected to last through late summer or early fall this year, but relatively mild winter weather and the efficiency of contractor crews allowed the project to be completed ahead of schedule.

Mowat Construction Company, a Woodinville-based firm, served as the project's primary contractor. Work began in March 2013 on the roughly \$10.6 million underpass project.

Reopening MLK, Jr. Blvd will restore a primary link to Downtown Yakima and relieve traffic congestion caused by detouring vehicles around the construction area while the underpass was being built. The part of Downtown Yakima that is home to the MLK, Jr. Blvd underpass has seen plenty of construction over the past few years. Work on the Lincoln Avenue underpass, located a block away from its MLK, Jr. Blvd sister underpass, began in 2010 and was finished in the fall of 2012.

The two Yakima underpasses had been in the planning and construction stages for more than a decade. The Washington State Congressional delegation (spearheaded by U.S. Senator Patty Murray), the 14th District state legislative delegation, and current and past Yakima City Council members played key roles in securing the majority of the needed funding from state and federal sources for construction.

BNSF also contributed more than \$1.5 million toward completion of the two underpasses.