

## PRESS RELEASE

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# I-35 Ramp Metering

## Community Conversations for the I-35 Ramp Metering Project Begin This Month

#KSI35RampMeters

KANSAS CITY – At rush hour, it is challenging to enter I-35 from the on-ramps due to heavy congestion. KC Scout, a traffic management program that is jointly operated by the Kansas and Missouri Departments of Transportation, is beginning the I-35 ramp metering implementation project to help address the issue. The project area spans I-35 from the Kansas/Missouri state line on the north to I-435 on the south. KC Scout and KDOT will begin discussing the project with the public via an online town hall meeting at [i35rampmeters.mysidewalk.com](http://i35rampmeters.mysidewalk.com) September 18 through October 31, 2015.

[i35rampmeters.mysidewalk.com](http://i35rampmeters.mysidewalk.com) is part of the two rounds of community conversations that are planned for the project. The first will focus on the list of potential ramp metering locations. A second round will center on the final list of ramps to be metered. Each will include online town hall meetings available at [i35rampmeters.mysidewalk.com](http://i35rampmeters.mysidewalk.com) and public open houses. In addition, Scout will station its vehicles at popular gathering spots along the corridor to hear the public's views on the project. Anyone with an interest in I-35 can lend his or her voice to the conversation. Register to comment via the online town hall meeting at [i35rampmeters.mysidewalk.com](http://i35rampmeters.mysidewalk.com).

KC Scout and KDOT are developing the project with input from local governments. The planning phase began this summer and will conclude this fall with a list of ramp meter locations. Construction is anticipated to begin during the summer of 2016. The project is part of a broader vision to address congestion by adding ramp meters and other strategic road improvements along the entire I-35 corridor in the Kansas City Metro Area.

For more information about the project, visit [kcsout.net/rampmetering](http://kcsout.net/rampmetering). You may also contact K. Mark Sommerhauser, KC Scout Transportation Project Manager, at 816-607-2243 and [karsten.sommerhauser@modot.mo.gov](mailto:karsten.sommerhauser@modot.mo.gov) or Michele Compton, KC Scout Senior Communications Specialist, at 816-607-2027 or [michele.compton@modot.mo.gov](mailto:michele.compton@modot.mo.gov).

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## Background and Schedule

Studies show I-35 is the most heavily traveled freeway in the Kansas City Metro Area. According to the *I-35 Moving Forward* study, about a third of the traffic on I-35 is described as “congested” and the congestion is anticipated to double in the future, travel speeds will drop below 30 miles per hour (mph) during rush hours, and truck traffic is projected to increase three-fold by 2040<sup>1</sup>.

Much of the congestion today is non-recurring, meaning it usually results from an incident, such as a crash or work zone. The State’s limited budget makes adding lanes to increase freeway capacity unlikely for the foreseeable future. As a result, KDOT and local governments are exploring alternative strategies for I-35 that benefit the corridor as a whole while helping to relieve congestion, improve safety, and increase traffic flow along the entire route as recommended in *I-35 Moving Forward*.

KDOT partnered with the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) and a range of stakeholders from Johnson, Miami, and Wyandotte Counties to develop the plan in 2013. It is a companion document for KDOT’s *Five-County Regional Transportation Study*. Ramp metering was included among the near-term opportunities proposed for I-35 and this summer KDOT kicked off Phase 1 of a multi-step process to install ramp meters on the freeway.

The project area includes the I-35 on-ramps between the Kansas/Missouri state line and I-435. Implementing ramp meters within the project area is part of a long-term goal to install ramp meters on most of the arterial on-ramps onto I-35 in the KC Metro Area. Ramp meters are effective at reducing the conflicting merging movements that lead to crashes, which are one of the largest contributors to congestion in the corridor.

The project is funded with approximately \$1 million via a federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grant from MARC and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Set Aside funds from KDOT. Ramp metering is a cost-effective strategy for addressing congestion issues on I-35, especially those caused when large groups of vehicles attempt to enter the freeway at once during rush hours.

The schedule for the project involves:

- Planning and Public Involvement: Summer to Fall 2015
- Design: Fall 2015 to Winter 2016
- Construction: Summer 2016
- Operation: Fall 2016
- Evaluation: Fall 2016 to Summer 2017

<sup>1</sup>[http://www.ksdot.org/Assets/wwwksdotorg/pdf\\_files/I-35MovingForwardFactSheet.pdf](http://www.ksdot.org/Assets/wwwksdotorg/pdf_files/I-35MovingForwardFactSheet.pdf)

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## Community Input

Because input from the I-35 corridor community is important to the success of the ramp metering implementation project, KC Scout and KDOT are coordinating to offer the public several tools for sharing their thoughts, questions, or concerns.

### Public Open Houses

Two rounds of public open houses will be held in communities in Wyandotte and Johnson Counties to review the potential ramp metering locations. The open houses will provide community members with an opportunity to speak in person with the project team while reviewing large scale exhibits of the recommendations for I-35.

### Mobile Meetings

KC Scout will bring its vehicles and project materials to key shopping destinations, community events, and other locations near I-35 to present the potential list of ramp metering locations and later this fall the final ramps selected to be metered. The mobile meetings will help the project team gather input from both neighborhood residents and commuters who live and work closest to potential ramp meter locations.

### 24/7 Commenting

To ensure that community comments can be gathered from people who are unable to attend either the open houses or mobile meetings, KC Scout and KDOT will make online comment forms and town hall meetings available to the public at [i35rampmeters.mysidewalk.com](http://i35rampmeters.mysidewalk.com). Both will be available before, after, and during scheduled meetings and will enable interested stakeholders to comment when it is most convenient for them—anytime 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### Social Media and More

KC Scout and KDOT will use social media tools, such as Twitter, You Tube, Facebook, and Flickr, to share information about project milestones and upcoming public involvement opportunities. E-mail blasts will also be sent to communities throughout the corridor.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is the purpose of this project?**

At rush hour, it is challenging to enter I-35 from the on-ramps due to heavy congestion, so KDOT and KC Scout are responding by adding ramp meters to some of the I-35 on-ramps between the Kansas/Missouri state line and I-435.

### **What are ramp meters?**

The meters work and look similar to traffic signals. Drivers obey them as they would other traffic signals. A red light means stop, a green light allows vehicles to proceed down the ramp and merge onto the freeway. The meters monitor and control traffic entering the freeway during the morning and afternoon peak-time commutes.

### **What will ramp meters do for I-35?**

Installing ramp meters will decrease the number of sudden weaving and braking moments that happen as vehicles merge onto I-35 from the on-ramps. It will also reduce crashes and allow more vehicles to smoothly drive along the freeway. By regulating the flow of traffic, ramp meters actually allow more vehicles to use the freeway.

### **How long will the project last?**

The planning phase of the project began this summer. Public meetings for review and comment of potential locations will occur during the fall. The planning phase will conclude with a list of potential ramp meter locations. Construction is anticipated to begin during the summer of 2016 and be completed by fall 2016.

### **How long will I wait on the ramp?**

Existing wait times on ramp meters in the KC Metro Area are less than a minute. During the analysis of ramp meter operations along the I-435 project, researchers found that the total wait time on the ramp usually averaged from 25 to 35 seconds and no ramps experienced a wait longer than 60 seconds. KDOT expects similar wait times to occur along the I-35 corridor in locations where ramp meters are installed.

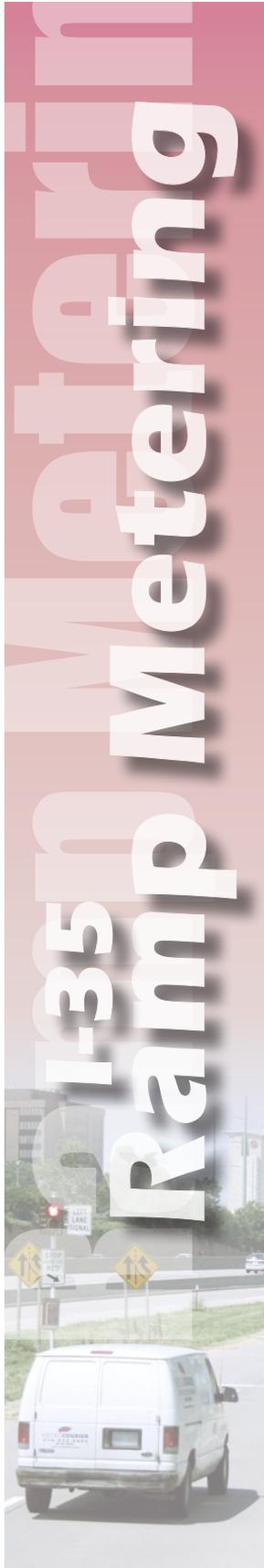
### **Will the number of cars waiting on the ramps back up onto city streets?**

No. The ramp meters are designed to turn off if the number of cars waiting on the ramp grows to the point where they back up onto city streets. The meters will turn back on once the ramp queue is reduced to a reasonable level.

### **How will I know if a ramp meter is turned on?**

Flashing lights located near the ramp entrance alert motorists that the ramp is being metered and that they should be prepared to stop. Signs and pavement markings also indicate where to stop and how to proceed.

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**Can I bypass the meters?**

No. Drivers must obey them as they would other traffic signals.

**Can emergency responders bypass the meters during emergencies?**

Yes. Ramp meter signals include adequate shoulder width for emergency vehicles to pass vehicle queues and access the freeway in emergency situations.

**Are other cities using ramp meters?**

Yes. Ramp meters are used in most major metropolitan areas across the county including Milwaukee, Seattle-Tacoma, Portland, Phoenix, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Denver, Chicago, and many other cities.

**Will KC Scout install ramp meters on other KC Metro Area freeways?**

The I-435 ramp meters were the first. Then two more became operational mid-August 2015 at the U.S. 69 and 135th Street Interchange in Overland Park. The planning phase of the I-35 ramp metering implementation project also began this summer. Successful installation and implementation could lead to the addition of ramp meters on other KC Metro Area freeways.

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## Contacts

### **KC Scout**

*[kcscout.net/rampmetering](http://kcscout.net/rampmetering)*

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