



A small crowd gathered upstairs at Birmingham's [Boutwell Auditorium](#) to learn about plans for the replacement of 6,600 feet of bridge deck between U.S. Highway 31 and the area known to many locals as [Malfunction Junction](#).

Those in attendance did learn about how that plan would proceed, including receiving some clarification about reports of the project taking two years. The first year would allow for things like electrical power to lighting along the highway to be relocated (possibly below ground) and for the estimated approximately 100 sets of steel girders to be ordered for the project - meaning little disruption for motorists. One direction would then be shut down for up to 25 weeks during the second year, with the other one being shut down afterward. This is similar to [what recently happened along the portion of I-20/59 in Bessemer](#) ([here's the official project page](#)) - a contract with incentives built in to encourage it to be completed as soon as possible.

Motorists looking to avoid the construction while passing through the metro area would be encouraged to use [Interstate 459](#) since planned highway projects cannot be rerouted along city streets (though officials did announce that three northbound and three southbound city streets running under the span would need to be open throughout the process).

After the update, those in attendance were informed by Brian Davis, [ALDOT](#)'s division engineer for the region that includes Birmingham, that both the city and Jefferson County had asked for the agency to consider completely replacing the section of road from the ground up in order to address several issues (including sound from the roadway) - and that they would be investigating the option before going forward.

There was no timetable available for when that investigation would be finished and how long it would hold up the start of the project if it was deemed an appropriate alternative.

While major construction would not interfere with [the expected opening](#) of [The Westin Birmingham](#) on January 1, 2013, it may be an issue for those planning to open businesses in what's currently being referred to as [The Marketplace](#) later on next year.