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Work planned on I-89 near Burlington

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Free Press Staff Report

SOUTH BURLINGTON -- The busiest stretch of Interstate 89 will be dug up for nearly two months as the Agency of Transportation replaces a deteriorating culvert that runs beneath all four lanes adjacent to the University of Vermont farm.

Preparations begin Monday, with construction expected to continue through November. Drivers should expect delays as the speed limit will be reduced to 45 mph in the work zone.

A much smaller culvert replacement project will take place this weekend in Franklin County. A segment of Vermont 120 near Lake Carmi in Franklin will be closed Friday through Sunday while a defective culvert is replaced.

Through traffic between Franklin to East Franklin will be detoured along Vermont Routes 105 and 36.

The \$2 million replacement project on I-89 between Exits 13 and 14 in South Burlington had been scheduled for spring 2008, but this month state inspectors concluded the culvert had to be replaced before winter. John Zicconi, spokesman for the Agency of Transportation, said fill around the culvert was leaking into it and washing away, leaving dangerous voids.

"We have people watching it every single day," Zicconi said.

The work will disrupt traffic, but temporary bypass lanes will be built for vehicles to use while the work is accomplished. State officials expect to have four lanes available for travel between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m., but lane reductions should be expected most nights.

"This culvert is a prime example of why we must place a greater emphasis on preventative maintenance of our existing bridges and culverts," said Neale Lunderville, secretary of transportation. "If we could have repaired or rehabilitated this culvert a few years ago, it likely would have cost \$200,000 to \$300,000. Now it will cost us more than \$2 million."