

= Interstate 359 =

Interstate 359 (I @-@ 359) is a part of the Interstate Highway System in the US state of Alabama . It is a spur route that runs for 2 @.@ 76 miles (4 @.@ 44 km) entirely within the city limits of Tuscaloosa . Its termini are just south of I @-@ 20 / I @-@ 59 interchange on the south side of town and U.S. Highway 43 (US 43) in downtown Tuscaloosa . The entire length is concurrent with U.S. Highway 11 (US 11) and Alabama State Route 69 (SR 69) , with both continuing as at grade thoroughfares north and south of the shorter Interstate .

= = Route description = =

I @-@ 359 begins just south of the I @-@ 20 / 59 interchange at the western terminus of Skyland Boulevard (US 11 , SR 7) and SR 69 . From this point the route travels in a northerly direction where it meets Interstate 20 / 59 at a partial cloverleaf interchange . The route reaches its first exit at 35th Street in a half cloverleaf configuration , which provides access to the University of Alabama . I @-@ 359 then continues in a northerly direction paralleling Greensboro Avenue to its northern terminus just north of 15th Street where the limited access freeway transitions into an at grade thoroughfare as it enters downtown Tuscaloosa .

From its crossing of the Alabama Great Southern Railroad (AGS) through the northern terminus , the highway in its entirety is elevated along a continuous bridge span . I @-@ 359 also features a wrong @-@ way concurrency for its entire duration with travel from downtown Tuscaloosa being signed as both I @-@ 359 and SR 69 south and US 11 north , and with travel from the south being signed both I @-@ 359 and SR 69 north and US 11 south .

= = History = =

In the early 1960s , local planners and elected officials stated the need for direct access to Interstate 59 from the city of Tuscaloosa . As annexation had not yet brought the city limits to the I @-@ 59 corridor , Interstate 359 was originally to be the only access provided to I @-@ 59 directly from Tuscaloosa . The route , as originally envisioned , was to have no exits for the duration of its route between its southern terminus at I @-@ 59 and its northern terminus at 15th Street in downtown Tuscaloosa .

Actual planning for I @-@ 359 commenced in 1961 , and by 1971 , the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) announced that federal funding would be sought for its construction . Planning for the corridor continued throughout the 1970s , only to stall briefly due to complications with the required environmental impact assessment associated with the project . By 1976 , it was announced I @-@ 359 would have an exit both at 35th Street and 15th Street to improve access to both the University of Alabama and Stillman College .

In 1977 , ALDOT publicly unveiled the final routing of the route and presented it at a series of public meetings in August 1977 . The selected route resulted in the slight relocation of 35th Street , the construction of a bridge along 31st Street over the freeway and the construction of a continuous viaduct along the final leg of the freeway through its 15th Street junction . Plans were also unveiled to add an additional travel lane in each direction along I @-@ 20 / 59 between its junction with I @-@ 359 and McFarland Boulevard .

Following the acquisition of the necessary right @-@ of @-@ way , phasing of the project was released in June 1979 . The first phase included the completion of the interchange at I @-@ 20 / 59 and lane expansion ; the second phase included the segment between I @-@ 20 / 59 and the AGS railroad crossing ; and the third phase included the elevated segment through the northern terminus in downtown Tuscaloosa . Construction would commence in 1980 on the first phase , with the bid for the second phase setting a then @-@ record for cost for a Tuscaloosa road project at \$ 11 @,@ 884 @,@ 450 . As construction was wrapping up on phase two , phase three of the project again set a record cost at \$ 17 @.@ 4 million in January 1982 . The phase included the completion of the viaduct section of the freeway , constructed at an average elevation of 22 feet (6 @.@ 7 m) above

grade . The first segment of I @-@ 359 opened to traffic in October 1982 between I @-@ 20 / 59 and Exit 1 . Costing \$ 41 million at completion , I @-@ 359 was officially dedicated and opened for traffic on September 13 , 1983 .

= = Exit list = =

The entire route is in Tuscaloosa , Tuscaloosa County .