

TELL PROGRESS ON CONGRESS ST. SUPER-HIGHWAY

Survey Gives an Idea of Future

BY HAL FOUST
(Pictures on back page)

The Congress st. expressway, actively promoted for almost a half century, is finally taking form. Work is underway along most of its 15 miles from Michigan av. to the Du Page-Cook county line. Passersby can tell where it's going and get some idea of what it's going to look like.

Progress in the last few months has been stepped up. Richard Van Gorp, chief engineer of superhighways for the city, said yesterday that he foresaw completion in 1955. Before the steel strike this year, 1954 was the target for finishing the job.

A survey tour of the route yesterday by THE TRIBUNE indicated that all might be finished by 1955 with two important exceptions. Nothing is being done by the Park district to link Lake Shore dr. with the Congress expressway.

County Halts Work

The Cook county highway department has halted its work between Austin blvd. and Des Plaines av. until there is a decision on the future of the Chicago, Aurora & Elgin railroad abutting the proposed right of way.

The outlook appeared to be that by 1955 traffic east bound from DuPage county will drive 5 miles on expressway, then detour for a couple of miles on narrow and congested Oak Park streets, and then resume expressway travel for seven miles into the Loop. But it will be difficult to reach the lake front, with its beach, Soldiers' Field and Lake Shore dr.

We took the ride with J. Walter Grimm, construction engineer for the city, and Hugo Stark, assistant chief engineer for county highways. At Michigan av., the Congress hotel and the old Auditorium hotel are being tapped preparatory to cutting into the sides of the buildings to recess their sidewalks in arcades. The new width of Congress st. roadway is to be from building line to building line.

New Sidewalks Laid

West of Wabash av., the arcading is nearing completion. Old sidewalks are torn up to become part of the roadway. New sidewalks are laid within building lines.

From State st. to Clark st., the new wide pavement of Congress st., with a median curb, is being used by traffic.

West of Clark st., workmen are preparing to take a thick slice off the seven story Western Union building. Congress st. here is to pass under trackage of the La Salle st. station. The foundation for this underpass was completed this year. West of the station, the old customs house is coming down. Sherman st. is to be moved to an alley a half block farther west.

A broad right of way has been

cleared to the south branch of the Chicago river. This is the site for a plaza and for a traffic interchange with the extension of double decked Wacker dr. Parked cars now occupy the clearing. East of the postoffice, the red steel of a bridge foundation rises from the river.

Canal St. Dipped

West of the postoffice, Canal st. has been dipped to a lower level so it can pass under the expressway. The ceiling of the arcade thru the postoffice is going to be raised seven feet.

From Canal st. to Desplaines st., girders and beams are in place for an elevated highway. To the west, a broad right of way has been cleared for an elaborate traffic interchange. It will connect with a future expressway to the south and one to the Ohio-Ontario one way system on the near north side.

From a Halsted st. bridge over an excavation for the expressway may be seen a portal to the subway tunnel under the river. West from this tunnel rapid transit trains are to run in an open cut between the pair of one-way pavements of the expressway. Excavation is about 80 per cent completed between Halsted and Racine. The dirt is trucked to the lake front north of Foster av. for the extension of Lake Shore dr. northward. Digging has started between Racine and Sacramento blvd.

Temporary Tracks Laid

For the removal of the Garfield Park elevated structure between Sacramento and Aberdeen st., temporary tracks have been laid in the south half of Van Buren st. and ramps are nearly complete for the connection. A copper shortage will delay using this railway until about March.

Almost all of the buildings have been removed to clear the right of way as far west as Kedzie av. On west, wreckers are at work. Some of the clusters of partly razed buildings look like a bomb had hit them. Others are vacated and have broken windows.

In Columbus park, at the city limits, some buildings are being moved for the expressway right of

way abutting the C. A. & E. tracks. West thru Oak Park, the county has acquired a few pieces of property but no work has been done.

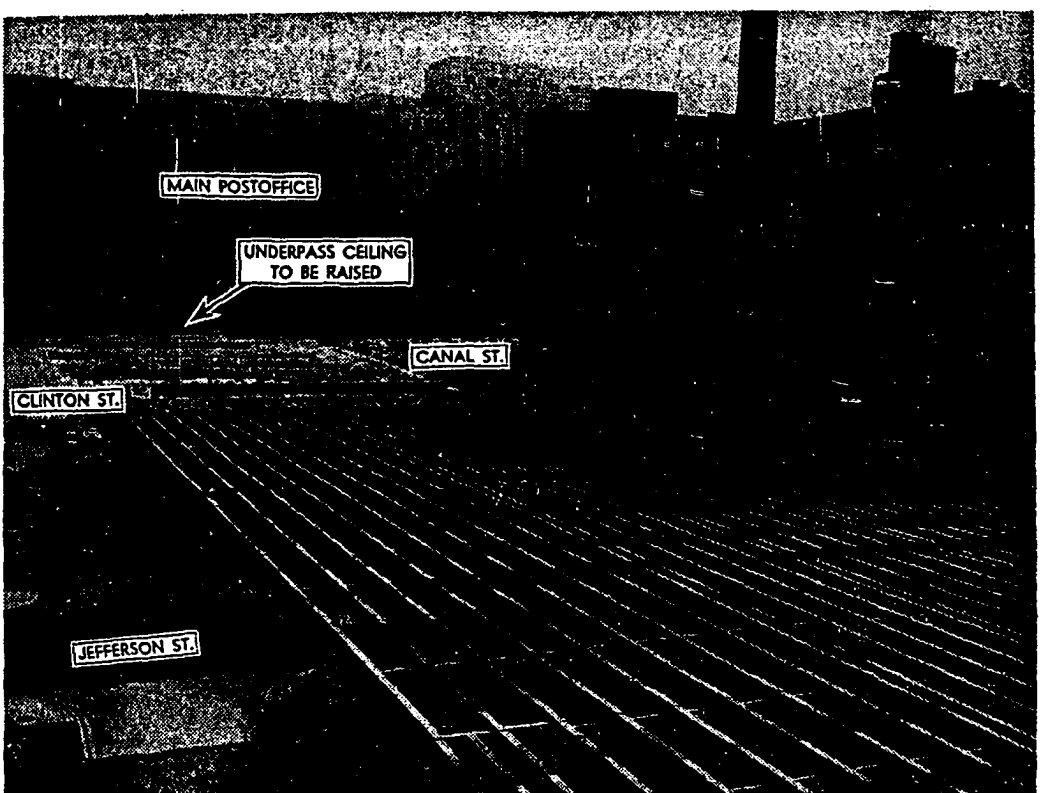
Bridges Partly Finished

West of the Des Plaines river, partly finished bridges cross the expressway right of way at 1st, 5th, 9th, and 17th avs. Construction has been delayed by the shortage of steel forms.

Dirt from excavation in the express right of way in Maywood is being trucked to the right of way in Hillside where the expressway will be on an elevated embankment. The 25th av. bridge is awaiting steel. A bridge over Addison creek is under construction. The last of 31 houses are being moved from the right of way. A run around for the Indiana Harbor Belt railroad is being built as a detour while a new bridge for the railroad is to be constructed. A similar temporary run around for the Illinois Central railroad farther west is about completed preliminary to carrying the expressway overhead. Earth movers are building an embankment for the expressway to pass over Wolf rd. A temporary by-pass for Mannheim rd. has just been finished.

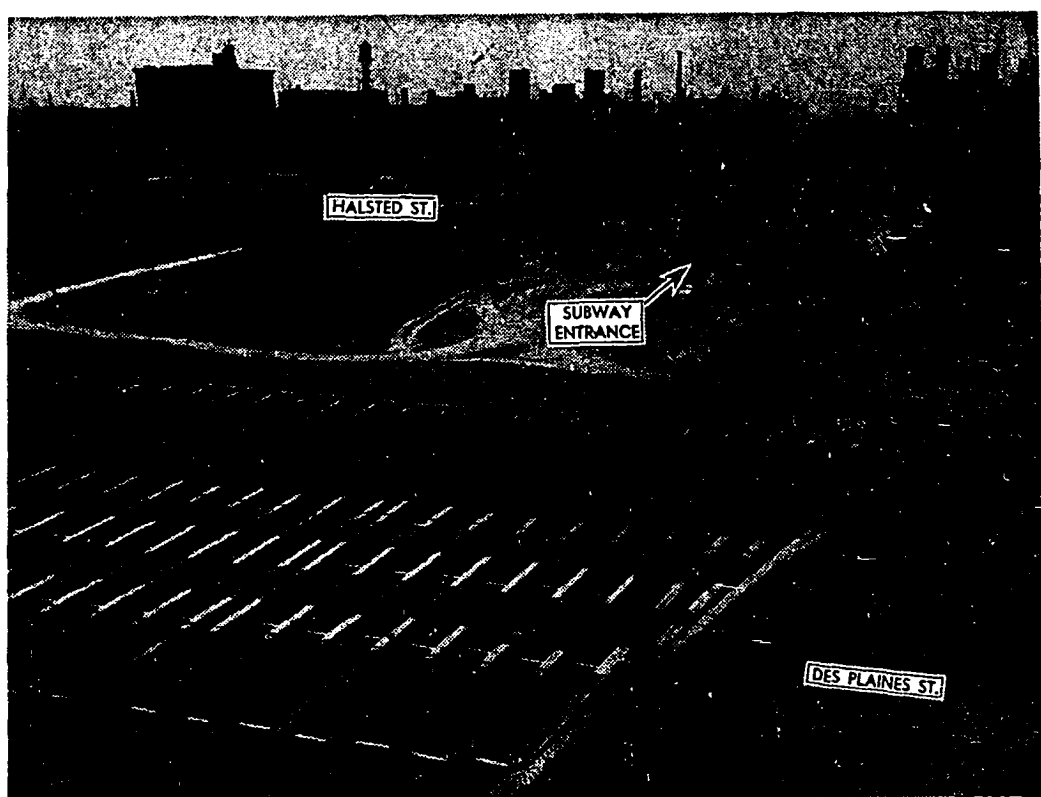
The city, county and state, bearing the expenses jointly, have spent 63 million dollars on the expressway to date. It is estimated that 82 million dollars will be needed to finish the improvement. The construction pace, just recently getting into full swing, will be stepped up more next year under the contract programs of the three collaborating governmental agencies.

CONGRESS EXPRESSWAY WORK PROGRESSES



[TRIBUNE Photo]

Expanse of steel girders to support Congress expressway west of main postoffice as work on highway progressed yesterday. Most of highway is slated for opening in 1955.



[TRIBUNE Photo]

View of Congress expressway right of way extending westward from postoffice. Rapid transit trains, emerging from subway, will travel between opposing lanes of auto traffic.



[TRIBUNE Photo]

View west from Clark st. showing how section of Western Union building will be removed (broken line) for widening of the Congress expressway.



[TRIBUNE Photo]

Looking east in Congress st. where building (right) west of Wabash av. has been arched so expressway can utilize former sidewalk space. Arcading will extend to Michigan av. (Story on page 12)