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NLR prepares for back-to-school traffic

by [Jordan Gass-Pooré](#) | August 16, 2015 at 3:34 a.m.

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Work continues Friday on a new crosswalk on Main Street near North Little Rock High School. Students will park in a new lot across from the school and will use the crosswalk when classes start Monday. - Photo by Staton Breidenthal

North Little Rock officials are preparing for anticipated congestion and increased traffic Monday when thousands of students return to city schools amid building and road construction at the high school.

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North Little Rock High School's expansive construction has generated parking and scheduling challenges that will affect commuters heading toward the Broadway and Main Street bridges and downtown Little Rock. More than 12,000 vehicles drove down Main Street daily in 2014, according to an Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department report.

"We fully understand there will be some confusion the first day of school," said Nathan Hamilton, the city's communications director.

So, drop-off points and entrances have been added to help students, faculty and staff get to school safely and on time.

The 900-foot stretch of Main Street between West 22nd Street and Pershing Boulevard will include a wider, distinctly marked pedestrian crosswalk to connect the high school with the new parking lot across Main Street.

The road has been under construction and reduced to two lanes since June, said Chris Wilbourn, North Little Rock chief city engineer.

It will return to a four-lane road Monday, Wilbourn said.

The timing of traffic lights on Main Street was changed this summer to allow more "green time" and will remain that way, he said.

Wilbourn said streetlights, pedestrian signals, the addition of a pedestrian island, sidewalks, curbing and an expanded right of way will not be complete by Monday.

Two North Little Rock police officers will assist groups of pedestrians and control traffic in the morning and afternoon for the first week of school, Wilbourn said.

The crosswalk will be marked on either side by elevated, bronze statues of Charging Wildcats, the high school's mascot, Superintendent Kelly Rodgers added.

The renovated high school will accommodate up to 3,000 students once all grades are moved in. On Monday, there will be 250 parking spaces available for students and staff. Another 250 spots will be open by mid-September, Rodgers said.

The city and the school district will share the cost of the more than \$1 million in improvements to Main Street next to the renovated high school.

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