

Changes planned for Route 3, U.S. 17 interchanges off I-95

BY SCOTT SHENK/THE FREE LANCE-STAR | Posted: Tuesday, June 23, 2015 12:00 am

The Virginia Department of Transportation has plans to improve two of the Fredericksburg area's most troubled interchanges.

The highway department recently got \$18 million in federal funding to improve the interchanges at U.S. 17 in Stafford County and State Route 3 in Fredericksburg.

The interchanges were selected after an analysis of the interstates 95 and 81 corridors in an effort “to see where spot improvements could quickly reduce crashes, reduce the risk of injuries and fatalities and keep traffic moving locally and along the interstate,” according to local VDOT spokeswoman Kelly Hannon.

Crash rates on I-95 around the interchanges are high.

And both Fredericksburg-area interchanges are known for congestion problems, especially during the commuter rush.

The Route 3 interchange area is especially dicey with constantly crisscrossing traffic—cars exiting onto the Route 3 often weave across several westbound lanes to get to the Spotsylvania Towne Centre while other cars try to get to Central Park or head straight through the interchange.

That area of the highway regularly has the highest crash rate in the city.

The changes to that interchange will be drastic.

“I think it'll have a pretty profound effect,” Hannon said.

The highway department plans to rearrange and increase the lanes on the southbound I-95 ramp to westbound Route 3.

The plans call for creating a “free-flowing ramp” for traffic headed to the Central Park entrance, separating that lane from the lanes carrying traffic to the westbound lanes.

Traffic exiting onto westbound Route 3 will have three lanes.

At the end of the ramp, traffic will make a slight right onto the highway. And a red-light signal will be installed there as another measure to eliminate the conflicts and lane weaving on Route 3.

Hannon compared that new configuration to the southbound I-95 Aquia ramp onto State Route 610.

The highway department also will lengthen the exit ramp on southbound I-95 for traffic heading to

westbound Route 3.

Two other changes are planned for the interchange.

For traffic exiting westbound Route 3, both the entry ramp and acceleration lane onto northbound I-95 will be extended.

The U.S. 17 improvement will involve the extension of the acceleration ramp onto southbound I-95. That change is expected to help alleviate the regular backups of traffic trying to exit southbound U.S. 17 onto the interstate.

Hannon said the changes for both interchanges are under design.

VDOT plans to advertise the project for construction bids next summer. The work is expected to be completed by late 2017.