

Converting Route 3 turn lane could help

BY SCOTT SHENK | Posted: Friday, November 16, 2012 12:10 am

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The results are in on a study of the conversion of a dedicated right-turn lane to a travel lane on State Route 3 in Spotsylvania.

Such a switch along the 2-mile stretch on westbound Route 3 could improve traffic flow, but cost and safety issues remain. It's an often-congested stretch west of Interstate 95 from Bragg Road to Chewing Lane.

And the primary finding from the report is that a more-thorough study is needed to answer key questions.

The computer modeling report was conducted by staff at the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization. It was created at the request of David Ross, a member of FAMPO's policy committee and a Spotsylvania County supervisor.

Lloyd Robinson, FAMPO's administrator, said the report showed that there could be a "modest" improvement in traffic flow with the lane converted to through traffic, which would increase the stretch of highway to four westbound lanes.

Robinson stipulated that the report doesn't cover many important issues, such as safety, impacts to area businesses, cost estimates, as well as potential impacts to other roads along the corridor.

Plus, he said, even with the change, traffic on the corridor would continue to exceed capacity levels.

The report says that it could cost anywhere from hundreds of thousands of dollars to several million to rework the intersections where curbing and other infrastructure would have to be torn up and replaced.

Ross said the report proves the change would help. And he believes the costs could stay within a previously estimated figure in the \$1 million range.

"I'm always about spending taxpayer money wisely--the most bang for the buck," he said this week in an email. "So, cost is definitely a factor."

The lane seems to be virtually empty when he commutes through that stretch on weekday afternoons, Ross said. He added that he has paid particularly close attention to it lately.

"We are losing much of the rush-hour capacity that is already built [because of] these traffic-controlling terrain obstacles," he said, referring to the curbing that juts into the turn lanes at the intersections.

Ross added that the safety concern is something he doesn't take lightly, but other sections of the highway function OK without the dedicated turn lane.

Robinson said further study could show whether the change would be worthwhile.

Ross wants to pursue it.

The report will be included in the FAMPO board's Monday meeting agenda.

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