

Study may help Fredericksburg area commuters

BY SCOTT SHENK / THE FREE LANCE-STAR | Posted: Sunday, June 9, 2013 4:00 pm

The state has launched an interesting project on Interstate 66. While that's not in our area, it could positively impact the future of traffic management on interstates, including 95.

The project, which includes the University of Virginia and Virginia Tech, will use what is called connected-vehicle technology to monitor a four-square-mile area of I-66.

The test area will have 43 locations equipped with wireless technology. A dozen research vehicles will collect data on traffic "acceleration, braking, curve handling and emissions," according to a release from Gov. Bob McDonnell's office.

Officials hope it will give them an idea of how to manage traffic by studying patterns, and that the technology could allow them to get information that will let them know when crashes have happened by monitoring speeds, for example.

If the technology works, it'll take time to develop, for sure.

But who wouldn't welcome something that could make for better commutes and help avoid the complete gridlock and chaos we experience because of crashes on I-95?

Dear Scott: On my southbound trip home from D.C. in the afternoons, when coming off

I-95, I use the lane that puts me into the protected lanes to turn left into the Mine Road commuter lot.

We have to wait for a green light in order to cross the main lanes into those protected lanes. The leftmost lane of the main lanes is marked as a left-turn lane, into the commuter lot lanes.

I have noticed at least three times in the past year that the cars in that far left lane think they can make a "left turn" on red into the commuter lot lanes. I was once even sideswiped by one.

I now wait when my signal turns green to see if anyone is going to sideswipe me again, sometimes resulting in a honk from the car behind me.

The solution is simple: a rectangular sign next to the leftmost signal of the westbound lanes stating "no left turn on red."

Please look into this and encourage VDOT to fix this problem, before another needless accident occurs.

—**Laura Valero, Stafford**

This is a tricky situation, and an issue that isn't entirely clear. But let's give it a try.

First, as the Virginia Department of Transportation's Kelly Hannon pointed out, drivers don't really make

a left turn off the I-95 exit to the dedicated left-turn lanes for Salisbury Drive.

“Drivers leaving the exit ramp are making an unusual turn—it is a right turn, but they also move slightly to the left to enter the lanes,” she said in an email.

Hannon said that a traffic engineer visited the sight last week.

He “did not witness any vehicles turning right on red, and exiting from the off-ramp in order to proceed to the two left-turn lanes on Garrisonville Road for Salisbury Drive, which leads to the Mine Road commuter lot.”

The engineer didn't see any problems with traffic in that area, and it was during heavy commuter flow, Hannon said.

Also, she added, there have been no reported “right-turn on red” crashes reported (VDOT uses a threshold of \$1,500 in property damages and/or injuries) at the spot.

If any regular drivers of that area know of a problem with the turn in question, feel free to contact me by phone or email.

You can also contact Hannon at 374-3344 or kelly.hannon@vdot.virginia.gov.

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