

VDOT unveils plans to fix problematic Route 3 interchange in Fredericksburg

By SCOTT SHENK THE FREE LANCE-STAR | Posted: Tuesday, July 19, 2016 10:33 pm

Details of the planned changes to the State Route 3 and Interstate 95 interchange in Fredericksburg were unveiled Tuesday evening.

The plans drew a mixture of hope and skepticism for one of the area's most problematic roadways, where crashes and congestion are common.

The Virginia Department of Transportation hopes the estimated \$21 million project will fix those problems.

The interchange is wedged in the midst of a heavy commercial corridor, including Central Park and Spotsylvania Towne Centre, where a mixture of residents, shoppers and commuters vie for space on Route 3 and the exits.

"Right now, Route 3 is a complete screw-up," said Tom O'Brien, a Lake of the Woods resident who has been commuting to Washington, D.C., for more than two decades.

He thought one portion of the project, separating traffic exiting from southbound I-95 onto westbound Route 3, "might help."

But he and others weren't too sure about the signal-controlled left-turn lanes that will replace one loop of the cloverleaf for Route 3 traffic exiting onto northbound I-95.

That portion of the project would create three new left-turn lanes for eastbound Route 3 traffic to get to a new on-ramp. Traffic signals will be installed to manage the exiting traffic.

Those signals will have to manage a lot of traffic during the weekday morning rush, where about 1,900 cars exit during the peak hour.

"I still don't know if this is the fix," said Sha Hinnant, a Spotsylvania County resident all too familiar with the interchange.

Hinnant is glad the loop will be removed, saying she has seen a lot of crashes there over the years. But she and others are worried that traffic will back up at the new signalized left-turn lanes during the morning commuter rush.

VDOT officials say the turn-lane signals will be synchronized with other Route 3 red lights to help avoid backups.

Another change for that traffic exiting onto northbound I-95 will be the extension of the merge lane beyond the Cowan Boulevard overpass.

There is an option to move the eastbound Route 3 ramp for traffic exiting from northbound I-95 to increase the merge area. That change is dependent on funding.

The response to another portion of the plan—the changes for exiting southbound I-95 traffic was more positive.

On southbound I-95, the ramp to westbound Route 3 will be extended and will have two lanes instead of one. Those two exit ramp lanes will feed into three lanes for traffic turning right onto westbound Route 3 and one lane dedicated to Central Park traffic; a six-inch-tall curb will be installed to separate the Route 3 and Central Park traffic.

A signal will manage traffic heading to Route 3. Also, there will still be a right-turn lane to Central Park for westbound Route 3 through-traffic.

“This is a good idea,” Hinnant said. “But whether the drivers adhere to it I don’t know.”

Work on the project could start next spring, according to local VDOT spokeswoman Kelly Hannon.

The project is scheduled to be completed by the fall of 2018.

VDOT says work on the long-awaited project could start next spring, and the work is scheduled to be completed by the fall of 2018.