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Traffic relief could be coming sooner than expected for State Highway 161 stretch in Irving



By Tom Benning / Reporter

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Traffic relief could be on the way sooner than expected for the car-clogged, three-mile stretch of State Highway 161 just north of State Highway 183 in Irving.

The unusual corridor — a chunk of state-maintained freeway stuck between two pieces of the North Texas Tollway Authority's President George Bush Turnpike — will be part of an upcoming pilot program by the Texas Department of Transportation effort to reduce congestion without increasing capacity.

Within the next six to 12 months, officials revealed Friday, the shoulders on that stretch of road, between State Highway 183 and Belt Line Road, will start being used as third lanes during peak rush-hour periods.

Since that would eliminate a place for disabled vehicles to pull over, the pilot effort will feature dynamic messaging signs, highway traffic cameras and a fleet of rapid response tow trucks, said Michael Morris, transportation director at the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

Traffic speeds will be monitored to determine whether the effort is actually making a difference.

"We're trying to come up with interim solutions that have a huge impact," said Morris, who added that the idea will also be tested in Houston.

Planners expect to eventually expand that stretch of State Highway 161 to better integrate it with the surrounding Bush Turnpike. Since the highway's free lanes must remain free, the expansion would involve managed toll lanes similar to those being built on LBJ Freeway.

But officials hope the upcoming pilot effort can help the traffic crunch in the short-term. And if the it could be implemented on highways statewide.

"You're saying to the driving public, 'How can we be smarter each and every day and mitigate and some new capacity?'" Wilson said.

We'll have more on the pilot project in the coming days, so stay tuned.

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James J Horn 3 days ago

Officials ought to fix the sever DIP on 161 in the North bound lanes just North of 183!! Doing 70 over those dips almost causes you to loose control of your auto if you didn't know they were there !!

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