Traffic lights no longer work well on Ohio 32

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Manger

Signal upgrades in Milford:
Intersection of Chamber Drive and Milford Parkway
Intersection of Chamber Drive and Walmart
Intersection of U.S. 50, Ohio 131 and Milford Parkway
Intersection of U.S. 50 and Cemetery Road
Intersection of U.S. 50 and Mohawk Trail
The five-point intersection at U.S. 50 and Lila Avenue
For more information about construction projects in Clermont County, as well as the latest in road closures, go to goclermont.org.

UNION TWP. — Imagine driving on Interstate 275 and running into a traffic light.

To the Clermont County Engineer's office, that makes as little sense as the traffic lights at key intersections of Ohio 32.

"What people need to understand is the volume of traffic (on Ohio 32) is approaching interstate levels," said Pat Manger, Clermont County engineer.

More than 150,000 vehicles drive through the I-275/Ohio 32 interchange every day, according to information provided by the engineer's office.

The state route is struggling to keep up, which leads to traffic backups every morning and at 5 p.m., said Craig Stephenson, chief deputy engineer.

"Traffic lights will only work for so much volume. (Ohio) 32 has reached its failure point," Stephenson said. "There's nothing wrong with the road, but it can no longer function properly."

The problem will only intensify with the "unprecedented amount of construction" going on in the Eastgate area of Union Township, he said.

But the solution is not to take down existing traffic lights on Ohio 32, it's to upgrade them, said Jeremy EvansCQ, traffic engineer.

"We're making some modifications to all 50 signals (in the county). They'll be getting LED lights and better backup batteries," Evans said. "But 14 signals in the Eastgate area are being updated to adaptive traffic control."

Those Eastgate signals will be a part of what Manger calls their "Intelligent Transportation System."

"What we're doing is linking (traffic lights) together so they can talk to each other. That information will come back to this office and we'll monitor that," Manger said. "We'll be able to adjust timing and do things and see what's going on with those intersections and develop (alternative plans)."

The new system will be able to tell how many cars are on the road and adjust how long lights stay green - without assistance from an employee because the system can "adjust on the fly," Evans said.

"Right now, when someone pulls up to a side street, there's a sensor that will give them green time, but it might be too much or it may be too little," he said. "There could be one guy on a local road and 50 on the main road - it doesn't matter, it will give the same amount of green time when the sensor is set off."

With the updates, the system will be able to look ahead and see when there's a break in traffic to facilitate better light changes.

The upgrades cost $2.4 million. That money came from funding received from the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments, with Clermont County's Transportation Improvement District paying $400,080 of it.

Most of those funds will be put toward the Eastgate area, but six lights in Milford also will be updated so they are synced to the same clock, Evans said.

"In Milford, each traffic signal is manually synced by a watch," he said. "As you know, watches can get out of whack and when you're talking about traffic signals, if you're off five seconds that's big."

The engineer's office is doing underground work now to get everything up to Americans with Disabilities Act standards in preparation for the upgrades, Evans said.

Materials were ordered this month, and the goal is to complete the Intelligent Transportation System by Nov. 1, he said, just in time for the Thanksgiving shopping season.

"This (update) allows us to maximize our infrastructure," Evans said.