

## Our Transportation System is in Crisis – 230

Newsday reported the Minister of Works and Transport that *“Government is in the process of installing 13 police surveillance bays along the Uriah Butler Highway [and Solomon Hochoy Highway] at a cost of \$14 million... We should have police cars placed at these bays intermittently. These cars will not only be able to maintain law and order, but on either side of the highway, North or South, they will be able to pursue criminals and law breakers without having to go as far as the flyovers.”* (April 26, 2011).

I have some concerns about the evolution of this measure.

Did the Police ask for this, especially since patrol cars are hardly ever seen on the highway? Clearly, highway patrol is of tertiary level of interest to the Police. Or, is it that they require ‘surveillance bays’ to begin highway patrol?

Highways are the primary transport routes within the road hierarchy. The main elements to consider when planning and managing highways include: (a) Number of intersections to be minimised; (b) Suitable at-grade channelized intersections for minor flows; (c) Parking/stopping to be provided clear of main carriageway(s); (d) Bus stops and other loading areas (only permitted in exceptional circumstances) should be in separate well designed laybys; and (e) Grade separated intersections for extremely high flows.

Highway access management provides three major benefits to transportation systems through managing the number of conflict points that exist along a highway corridor: (i) Increased roadway capacity; (ii) Reduced crashes; and (iii) Shortened travel time for motorists

These surveillance bays are also known as bidirectional crossovers or U-turn median openings. A

bidirectional crossover is simply an opening in the median for vehicles to make U-turns from either direction.

The location and design of bidirectional crossovers are critical to their function. The common types of crashes associated with restricted visibility and lack of storage space are rear-end, angle, side-swipe, and head-on.

I believe unauthorised use will be a problem. I have been told that there will be surveillance cameras to monitor this, and that the penalties will be severe. Are the penalties not severe now for illegal use of the roadways, and what are the consequences? For example, the shoulder of a highway is exclusively for emergency stopping or parking, not for stopping for a ‘drink’ on the way to a lime, or for parking to visit a business place, etc. Yet, there is a roti shop and restaurant adjacent to the Solomon Hochoy Highway just south of the Freeport interchange, and cars and trucks are often parked on the shoulder, including police cars, particularly during lunch-time. What is now even more astonishing is that coincidentally a surveillance bay is being constructed very near to this site. Could turnarounds be facilitated by this measure, so that patrons would now access the venue more easily?

There is another location on the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway eastbound carriageway, near the industrial estate of El Socorro / Barataria, where vehicles are often parked on the highway shoulder for the drivers to transact business in the estate.

I also understand that the Police cars are to be parked in the surveillance bays for monitoring traffic. With the spate of head-on median crossover crashes, I think this is ill-advised. Police in the US are usually parked in a side road to

monitor traffic and conduct their speed checks.

What exactly will the highway patrol be monitoring in order to turnaround and pursue offenders? There is currently no approved use of speed guns.

Let us suppose a traffic crash occurs at one of the surveillance bay locations between a highway patrol car and civilian vehicle, during a patrol turnaround manoeuvre. If this matter is taken to the court, who will confirm that the bidirectional crossover is safe and adequate? And the highway patrol driver was acting responsibly?

What about if an errant vehicle is facilitated in crossing from one carriageway to the other at the bidirectional crossover location and a head-on crash occurs?

These things need to be analysed very carefully.

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