

The more our almost completely unregulated national vehicle mobility continues to spiral blissfully downward into chaos, the more inflexible motoring will become, and worse, the more intolerant road users will behave. It is therefore critical to establish standards for roadway use, within wish planning, analysis and enforcement would be consistently undertaken.

I read a very interesting letter to the Newsday editor on November 13, 2012 from Dr. Noel Kalicharan. I understood the following: (a) the roti shop customers who were parking on the recently created parking facility outside of the shoulder of the highway at the site of the recent 12-vehicle smash-up were not “impeding/blocking anyone”; and, (b) Sudden apparently extreme emphasis of parking enforcement at that highway site, with otherwise inconsistent or lack of monitoring of parking offences in most places, including Independence Avenue in San Fernando, and on the shoulder of the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway at St Augustine Girls’ school.

It is my intention today to introduce guidance on policies for the Uriah Butler Highway and Solomon Hochoy Highway, our remaining expressways, with a goal of retaining them as such (slim as that may be), with an opportunity to upgrade them to freeway standard. I’ll begin with some definitions. Roadway—The portion of a highway, including shoulders, for vehicle use; a divided highway has two or more roadways. Carriageway—The portion of the roadway for the movement of vehicles, exclusive of shoulders.

Arterial roads are the main transport routes within the road hierarchy. Their function is for movement, and they operate under the following conditions: (i) there is

no direct access to premises; (ii) any development is set well back from the highway; (iii) all access to premises are provided via collector roads; (iv) the number of intersections is minimised; (v) pedestrians are not permitted; (vi) and there is no stopping or parking on the carriageways.

When there is no at-grade intersection these roads are known as freeways, and when there are limited at-grade intersections they are called expressways. On some arterial roads there may be a relaxation of the direct access and pedestrian constraints, and in exceptional circumstances large individual developments may have direct access, and they are known as secondary or minor arterial roads, to differentiate them from primary or major arterial roads.

The frequency of crashes on a roadway is related to the number of conflict points along the roadway, as well as the magnitude of conflicting flows at each conflict point. A conflict point is a location where the paths of two motor vehicles, or a vehicle and a bicycle or pedestrian path, diverge, merge, or cross each other. The most common conflicts on highways are as follows:

(a) Diverging conflicts. These conflicts are caused by the separating of two traffic streams. Examples include exiting vehicles diverging from through-vehicles. If the speed of one movement is significantly different from the other movement, the resulting speed differential increases the risk of a rear-end collision.

(c) Merging conflicts. These conflicts are caused by the joining of two traffic streams. The most common types of crashes due to merging conflicts are side-swipe and rear-end crashes. Merging conflicts can be more severe than diverging conflicts due to the more

likely possibility of collisions to the side of the vehicle, which is typically less protected than the front and rear of the vehicle.

Despite the newspaper report suggesting that “a Nissan dump truck... veered off the highway and slammed into 12 vehicles parked on the shoulder of the road”, could it be that a vehicle on the highway ahead of the truck was trying to park, or that a parked vehicle was trying to leave the area?

It was reported last week that the Police requested the creation of this paved area outside the shoulder in order to facilitate their Surveillance Bay in the median. I am still to understand the purpose of the highway surveillance bays.

Perhaps because of mistaken belief that the shoulder is not “impeding/blocking anyone” has allowed these types of situations to be ignored, leading to lack of enforcement.

The owner of the roti shop is reported to have stated that he will go out of business as a result of the removal of parking along the highway. This roti shop is located just off Nelson Road which once connected Freeport Mission Road in the east with Calcutta Settlement Road No. 2 in the west, before the highway was built. The business place is already well-established, so with adequate promotion, potential customers could be encouraged to use Freeport Mission Road and Nelson Road to access business place. I know customers may say that that is too circuitous a route, and there is already so much traffic on Freeport Mission Road. However, retention of the highway as a primary arterial route for the already excessive traffic demands appropriate, consistent decisions.

Next week, I focus on highway frontage roads and high traffic generator developments.

