

Our Transportation System is in Crisis – 92

I am convinced that Chaguanas is the commercial centre of this country. The vehicle and pedestrian traffic congestion in this urban area with the fastest population growth is constant during the weekdays and worst on a Saturday. Don't even talk about the conditions on a Friday and Saturday at month end, or the weekend of Mothers' day, or like now – the Christmas Season.

Most people know that the borough of Chaguanas is divided into four quadrants, divided by the Uriah Butler Highway and Solomon Hochoy Highway which run north-south, and the Chaguanas Main Road and Southern Main Road, which run east-west.

Incidentally, my son asked me the other day, where does the UBH end and the SHH start. In addition to answering that question for the reader I will also differentiate between the Southern Main Road and the "Old" Southern Main Road, as many people mix these up. The following information may also be useful to Police officers who might confuse their recording of data when conducting certain traffic inquiries.

The UBH ends (and the SHH starts) just south of the Chaguanas Interchange, which is commonly called the Chaguanas Flyover. Its location is near the southern limit of Mid-Centre Mall on the western side of the highway, or the Seereeram Memorial Hindu School on the eastern side of the highway.

The "Old" SMR begins near the newly refurbished Sais Pandit Gas Station, located about 30 metres west of the signalised intersection of Gaston Street and the SMR. In fact the SMR ends at this intersection, and the "Old" SMR begins heading southwards, and also the Chaguanas Main Road begins heading west, initially as a four-lane divided roadway up to "Busy Corner". Busy Corner is the intersection of Chaguanas Main

Road, Endeavour Road, and the re-start of the SMR.

Before the Solomon Hochoy Highway and the Chaguanas Flyover were built, the SMR followed an east-west path from Montrose and then turned south at the Gas Station just described and cut across the path of the current Solomon Hochoy Highway, and continued on to the bend of the SMR just south of Mid-Centre Mall. At that time the Uriah Butler Highway (then called the Princess Margaret Highway) connected with the SMR at a roundabout, at a point about 150 metres south of the current Chaguanas Flyover.

It was only when the Solomon Hochoy Highway and Chaguanas Flyover were constructed that the segment of SMR between the Caparo River (at the southern end of Mid-Centre Mall) and the Chaguanas Main Road was built, (where the DSM Plaza and Mid-Centre Malls are located and which connects with Ramsaran Street), and a portion of the Chaguanas Main Road was made into a dual carriageway. The remaining portion of the SMR east of the Solomon Hochoy Highway between the Chaguanas Main Road and the Solomon Hochoy Highway became known as the "Old" Southern Main Road.

Along the path of the Southern Main Road which begins from Curepe and ends at Cedros, there have been several diversions over the years. As a trivia question, could you identify the path of the original Southern Main Road between St Mary's junction, Carapichaima and Mc Bean Village? As a hint, the "new" SMR is commonly known as the "Mc Bean Stretch". Where is the "Old" SMR?

Chaguanas consists of predominantly residential activities, largely because of ease of accessibility to the two city centres of San Fernando and Port of Spain,

as well as the industrial centre of Point Lisas. The business activities of the borough focus almost exclusively on residential service requirements, with some basic industries being set up because of the accessibility as identified before.

With the rapid conversion in the landuse from agricultural (sugar cane) to residential, the four primary roads consisting of the Uriah Butler Highway, Solomon Hochoy Highway, Southern Main Road, and Chaguanas Main Road which separate the residential areas, have seen a tremendous growth in business activity. The north-western and south-western quadrants are only connected to the north-eastern and south-eastern quadrants by the Endeavour and Chaguanas Interchanges. The result is that all roads are blocked for most of the weekday and completely on a Saturday. During peak weekday hours and all day Saturday, traffic on the interchanges at Chaguanas, Endeavour, Munroe Road and Carlsen Field are just about stagnant. Last Saturday, twice during the day, in order to get from the western side of the UBH to the eastern side I decided to use the interchange at Caroni Bird Sanctuary, 10 km away.

Several senior professionals at the Ministry of Works and Transport reside in the Chaguanas area, and must regularly experience this frustration. I am appealing to have interchange connections (described as viaducts in this column on November 22, 2007) at Jerningham Junction Road and at Edinburgh Gardens, in addition to a simple bridge across the Caparo River to link the Edinburgh Boulevard to the eastern side of Montrose. These are not difficult, yet extremely effective. Why not apply standard exam techniques of attempting the easier problems first,

and leaving the more complex ones
for after?

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