



Senator Matt Bartle – Serving Jackson County

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New Traffic Signal Timing System Improves Route 291 Driving Experience

For many people traveling through Lee's Summit via Route 291, the worst part of the drive, until recently, was being forced to stop at nearly every single traffic light. Now, with a new signal timing system implemented by MoDOT, drivers along the part of the highway between Route 50 and Interstate 470 are enjoying fewer stops, less gas consumption and improved travel times.

This new traffic signal system coordinated 12 traffic signals through the 2.5-mile city corridor to improve traffic flow. A recent evaluation by an independent research company shows that by implementing the system, average travel time from one end of Lee's Summit to the other has decreased an impressive 30 percent, saving drivers valuable time and money. As far as cost, employing it along Route 291 was found to be comparable to most video detection systems found at any given traffic signal. The system was implemented in March 2009 as a pilot program and the first impact study was conducted in April. A full statistical analysis will be performed after a final study is completed in September.

In addition to relieving the congestion that delays motorists along the route, the system was shown to reduce fuel consumption an average of 25 percent and decrease exhaust emissions significantly. Motorists traveling the corridor also saw a considerable decrease in the number of stops—as much as 95 percent during some time periods.

Another positive result of the new system is that it has allowed Lee's Summit law enforcement to focus its efforts on other parts of the city because of the decrease in traffic

signal incidents along Route 291—such as red light running. It's also expected that the number of collisions at each intersection along the corridor will decrease when an incident study is completed down the road. With the undeniable improvements along Route 291, MoDOT is currently in the process of working with the city of Lee's Summit to help implement the new system along some of the busier city streets to improve congestion.

So how does this new system work that it can make such dramatic changes in the traffic flow through Lee's Summit? First, it uses video to evaluate the volume and flow of traffic. As vehicles move toward each signal, traffic signals intelligently adapt to the amount of traffic flow and keep a large group of vehicles moving through each intersection with minimal disruption to the side streets.

With the overwhelming improvements shown on Route 291, I am requesting that MoDOT also take steps to implement this system in other locations, such as along Route 7 in Blue Springs, which is a congested area that could be well served by less stops. The initial data on the overall improvements resulting from use of this system clearly shows that drivers across Eastern Jackson County could benefit from its use.

If you have any comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by e-mail at matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov or by phone at (888) 711-9278. My web address is <http://www.senate.mo.gov/bartle>.

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