

Our Transportation System is in Crisis – 255

I want to examine the usefulness of regulatory traffic signs stating “No Right Turns From the Left Lane” on several of our two-lane one-way roadways, particularly the following: (1) the southbound exit ramp of the Solomon Hochoy Highway at the Couva Interchange, and (2) John Street in Montrose Chaguanas at its intersection with Gaston Street, after the southbound exit ramp of the Uriah Butler Highway.

While there are no regulatory traffic signs, right turns are not permitted during the weekday morning peak period by the Police from the left lane of John Street at its intersection with Gaston Street in Montrose, Chaguanas. However Gaston Street also has two lanes, and both lanes are allowed to turn right into the Southern Main Road. The Chaguanas Police have interpreted that the right-turn movement from the left lane at that intersection is the primary cause of congestion to vehicles on the eastbound route of the Chaguanas Main Road in the immediate vicinity. The Police have discounted the contribution of the PH vans and maxi taxis under “the Flyover” as well as on De Verteuil Street, but that is not the subject today.

They have apparently missed the significant impact of the merging traffic delays at the intersection of John Street and De Verteuil Street from (a) the southbound exit ramp of the Uriah Butler Highway as well as areas north of Chaguanas, such as Lange Park and Endeavour; and (b) Eastbound traffic wishing to proceed into Chaguanas northeast, or eastbound traffic wishing to bypass the Southern Main Road. These delays are compounded by pedestrians wishing to cross from one side of John Street to the other, having just alighted from the PTSC bus that would have stopped at the top of the ramp on the Uriah Butler

Highway. In fact, there is significant pedestrian-vehicle conflict at various points on this intersection that warrants intervention by the authorities.

Next, on John Street prior to the Gaston Street intersection during the peak weekday morning period, merging of the left lane into the right lane is usually not permitted by drivers on the right lane, as gaps are not given between vehicles. The result is that it is impossible to enter the right lane to access Gaston Street for those vehicles from the Uriah Butler Highway. The Police then direct the left-laners to continue eastward for the next available right turn to return westbound! The traffic in the right-lane of John Street can easily merge into the left lane in order to proceed straight on John Street.

Therefore, the ability of John Street and Gaston Street to accommodate the volume of traffic wishing to enter Gaston Street is severely compromised by the unreasonable and unstudied action of the Police. They have obviously not recognised that the much lower proportion of straight-through traffic on John Street for whom they seek to provide reduced delays have another reasonable option, that is, they can choose to continue eastwards on the Southern Main Road. But, the highway traffic wishing to go westbound to the urban centre of Chaguanas have no other reasonable choice.

My suggestion for the Police at peak morning periods, say 7:00am to 8:30am:

(1) Remove the two officers from the intersection of John Street and Gaston Street;

(2) Place a Police Officer and Traffic Warden at the intersection of John Street and De Verteuil Street to assist the pedestrians and to facilitate merging and filtering traffic;

(3) Place a Police officer and a Traffic Warden at the signalised intersection of the Southern Main Road and Gaston Street, to prevent motorist entering the intersection when their exit is not clear, and the prevent maxi-taxis and PH taxis stopping on the Southern Main Road within 50 metres of the intersection.

Now, for the Couva Interchange. Vehicles in the left lane southbound exit ramp on the Solomon Hochoy Highway at Couva Interchange are not permitted to turn right towards the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. I suppose concessions might be given to large trucks.

The Couva Interchange is a diamond-type with four ramps, and a two-lane, two-way overbridge connecting communities east and west. This type of interchange is considered a low traffic volume structure, in that the carrying capacity of the ramps is of the order of 400 vehicles per hour, and each ramp consists of a single lane of 5-metre width travelled way. The southbound ramp traffic during the weekday morning peak period has more than doubled the design capacity, and so the authorities have correctly widened the ramp to two lanes as an interim traffic management measure to facilitate this change from a low-volume ramp to a high-volume ramp. The right-turners on this ramp comprise 95 percent of the traffic, so if left-laners must turn left, there will be a huge queue backing into the deceleration lane and ultimately into the left-lane of the two-lane southbound carriageway, and thus the capacity of the entire southbound traffic will be affected. Therefore, the Traffic Management Branch and the Police owe it to the motoring public to reconsider this traffic regulation.

On ramps, the numbers of right-turners are usually much higher

than left-turners, therefore two lanes of vehicles may enter the cross-traffic stream for each permitted two-way cross-traffic gap. Yes, I know that two lanes converge into one lane, but the ability of the lane to receive traffic is improved due to (a) the radius of curvature of right-turners from the left lane is much higher than those of a similar movement from the right lane; and (b) the rate of entry into the lane is faster. The queue, as a result of only right-turners from the right lane, is reduced significantly.

My recommendation: remove the “*No Right Turns From the Left Lane*” at Couva Interchange.

Here’s hoping you have an enjoyable Christmas with your family and other loved ones.

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