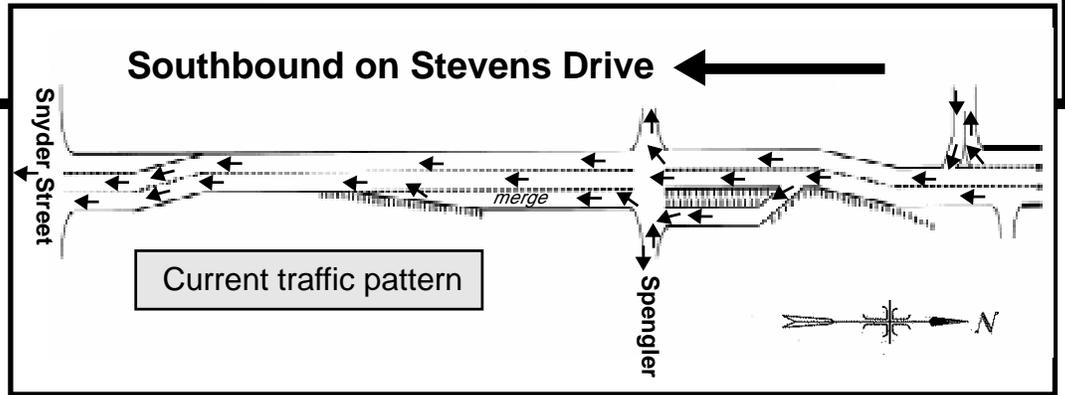


City of Richland outlines Stevens Drive changes



The Stevens Drive project came to a halt during the winter months. When completed (top), there will be four new traffic signals and more left-turn lanes. In the meantime, use caution and be aware of the markings and orange barrels in the vicinity of the Stevens Center Complex (inset). The City of Richland is hoping to resume construction this month, weather permitting.

Karen Welsh, Fluor Hanford

The hazards of traveling on the southbound lanes of Stevens Drive near the vicinity of the Stevens Center and Battelle complexes were a key topic at the January meeting of the Presidents' Zero Accident Council. Hanford commuters who drive that roadway have found that the City of Richland has made many roadway construction changes, with some posing potentially hazardous driving conditions.

At the PZAC meeting, Steve Stairs, a transportation engineer with the City of Richland, said the Stevens Drive project is complicated and comprises two stages. The first is what you see under way today between Snyder St. and Horn Rapids Road. The second phase will involve the reconstruction of the SR-240/Stevens intersection and repaving the portion of the roadway up to Snyder Street.

What's happening now?

The City of Richland began construction last fall on phase one of the Stevens Drive project. Winter conditions, however, caused the project to be shut down until spring. Since that time, the traffic controls on Stevens Drive have caused some confusion. According to Stairs, "Before the project shut down for the winter, the traffic pattern on Stevens Drive was revised to provide an acceleration lane for vehicles entering Stevens Drive from Spengler Street. Unfortunately, this change required a large number of southbound drivers to merge into a heavily used adjacent lane. Even though the signage and striping met the minimum standards, the traffic pattern was confusing for drivers, which led to a disregard of traffic controls."

To help alleviate some of the confusion, the city changed the flow of traffic in the middle of January. The traffic entering Stevens Drive from Spengler Street now merges into the southbound lanes and then shifts to the

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west, (rather than from the outside lanes on Stevens Drive). Once that traffic merges onto Stevens Drive with the other southbound traffic, both of the previously shifted lanes are shifted back to the east just before Snyder Street. The City of Richland stresses that this revision is temporary, and that traffic will flow straight once the first phase of the project is complete, which is targeted for the end of June.

What's the next step?

The City of Richland is hoping for construction to resume on Stevens Drive sometime this month. Once construction recommences, plans are that the completed Stevens Drive will be similar to changes made on the Bypass Highway by the Washington State Department of Transportation. The proposal includes installing traffic signals at the intersections of Spengler Street, University Parkway, First Street and Battelle Boulevard. Horn Rapids Road will remain a stop-sign-controlled intersection.

“The project, once complete, will provide three lanes in each direction, with a combination of shoulders and bike lanes on each side,” Stairs explained. “Four intersections will have traffic signals and be coordinated with the same time-based programming as on the Bypass Highway.”

All traffic-signal intersections will have protected left-turn phases, crosswalks, pedestrian push buttons and emergency-vehicle preemption, giving emergency vehicles priority through the intersections. The Hanford Fire Department is working with the Department of Energy Richland Operations Office and the city regarding the installation of this equipment on government emergency vehicles.

What can I do now?

During this time, drivers traveling on Stevens Drive near Stevens Center must be especially mindful of the traffic revisions and courteous to other drivers, particularly those who are merging into the heavy Hanford traffic at the end of the workday. This is *not* a time to be talking on a cell phone! Drivers need to be attentive not only to those immediately around them, but to the vehicles in all of the lanes, as some of the new traffic revisions may still cause some confusion.

Once construction resumes, drivers should continue to be attentive to possible traffic revisions even on a day-to-day basis. Also, please be alert and courteous to personnel who will be working on the roads. Remember, safety is everyone's business — not just in the workplace, but at home and on the road as well. ■