



NEWS

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LOS ANGELES' NEW SMART CORRIDOR TECHNOLOGY PAYS OFF WHEN SUDDEN PEAK HOUR FREEWAY CLOSURES OCCUR

A police chase and shooting that forced a three-hour freeway closure during peak morning traffic in downtown Los Angeles was the first real life test for the city's newly inaugurated traffic management system named the Santa Monica Freeway Smart Corridor.

The system worked-- normal gridlock conditions that have made L.A. the congestion capital of the world were cut in half.

After the police chase and fatal shooting on October 16, the eastbound Santa Monica Freeway was closed at San Pedro Street, east of downtown, from approximately 6:15 a.m. until 9:00 a.m.

The Smart Corridor Technology facilitated the deployment of a traffic management plan to reduce the traffic backup. Traffic conditions on the Santa Monica Freeway, as well as on parallel streets, returned to normal in less than twenty minutes after the freeway lanes were reopened which was less than half the time that could have been lost on a major traffic jam before the system was implemented.

"We know the system would work and it did," said Larry Zarian, chairman of the Los Angeles MTA. "Our capital investment in this project is as smart as the name of the corridor, and will benefit commerce and the public."

L.A.'s brand new high-tech traffic management system, kicked off in October, was designed to reduce traffic backups when big incidents or unusual congestion occur.

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Big incidents normally result in full freeway closures that stop traffic for at least eight miles and cause traffic delays that can last more than one-and-a-half hours after the freeway lanes reopen.

Three agencies managed the plan, each from its independent headquarters, but linked by a computer system operating with a shared software that allowed officers of each agency to observe the actions deployed by the others.

Traffic was rerouted via the Santa Ana and Harbor freeways and onto Washington, Adams and Venice boulevards, three arterial streets that run parallel to the Santa Monica Freeway.

Information about freeway and parallel street conditions was gathered through an automated network of closed-circuit video cameras, thousands of roadway sensors and ramp meters giving traffic managers in Caltrans, Los Angeles City Department of Transportation and the California Highway Patrol up-to-the-last-second information.

"We have termed the system the Smart Corridor because it uses electronic intelligence gathering devices to help keep traffic moving more efficiently," said Zarian.

This \$48 million high-tech communications system has been installed between Centinela Avenue to the west of the 405 Freeway and Soto Street to the East of downtown Los Angeles, along 17.3 miles of the Santa Monica Freeway, as well as streets parallel and perpendicular to it.

When the freeway becomes jammed, motorists are diverted off the freeway onto major bordering thoroughfares such as Olympic, Pico, Venice, Adams and Washington boulevards. Signals on the service streets are timed and controlled to keep traffic moving parallel to the freeway.

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Radio and television traffic reporters can retrieve the same information to update their listeners and viewers with the latest details about traffic conditions on the Santa Monica Corridor.

Motorists can receive Smart Corridor information through changeable message signs on the freeway or parallel boulevards, cellular phones and on two radio stations. Also before leaving their home or office, motorists can check an Internet Web Page, which is updated every minute.

The Smart corridor has been funded as a national demonstration project by federal and local money from California and the cities of Los Angeles, Beverly Hills, Santa Monica and Culver City.

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