

ODOT plans median barrier on Interstate 270

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By MIRIAM SEGALOFF
Enterprise Staff Writer

The Ohio Department of Transportation plans to install a cable barrier along the median of Interstate 270 in Gahanna to keep vehicles from crossing into oncoming traffic.

A cable barrier uses steel cable tightly strung between posts to prevent vehicles leaving the roadway from crossing the median.

ODOT spokesman Todd Sloan said this particular stretch of I-270, from Johnstown Road to Broad Street, was selected for the safety device because there have been a number of serious accidents there involving vehicles crossing into oncoming traffic.

The latest took place Thursday, Sept. 8, Gahanna police said, when a 53-year-old Columbus man was killed.

"We believe by putting in the median cable barrier, it will help prevent future accidents," Sloan said. "We've put this on the fast track to get it moving. It's something we definitely know will help prevent cross-over accidents."

According to statistics provided by the Gahanna police department, since 1999 there have been 525 accidents on I-270 within the city. Nine of those accidents, including four cross-over incidents, resulted in fatalities. Since 1991, there have been 13 fatal accidents on that stretch of I-270, six of them involving crossovers.

"I think it's long overdue when I look at the fatalities we've had on I-270," Gahanna police chief Dennis Murphy said. "The ability to reduce the number of head-on accidents will greatly reduce the number of fatalities."

Sloan said the roughly \$1.07-million project is scheduled to begin in spring 2006 and take three to four months to complete.

There is no cost to the city. The money, Sloan said, is coming from state (10 percent) and federal (90 percent) highway safety funds. In a related project, ODOT also will install a cable barrier along Interstate 70 from U.S. Route 33 to the Licking County line.

This is the third central Ohio median cable barrier to be installed recently.

Last year, the state installed the device on state Route 315 between Hayden Run and Bethel roads and on I-270 between I-70 and U.S. Route 33.

"So far, the preliminary results have shown some positive results and that there are some benefits," Sloan said. "That's why we're moving ahead and putting them on I-270 in the Gahanna area, where there have been a number of cross-over accidents."

Sloan said cable barriers are a cost-effective alternative to concrete median walls.

"We're really pennies on the dollar in comparison to a concrete barrier," Sloan said. "It's approximately \$70,000 per mile for the cost of the cable barrier versus \$340,000 per mile for concrete."

Gahanna's Murphy is happy to have the cable barriers but said motorists still need to take other safety precautions.

"Cables or not, the most important thing is wearing your seat belt because when you get ejected in a crash, you're going to get killed," Murphy said.