

Barriers May Help Prevent Head-On Collisions

Could Cause More Minor Accidents

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PORTAGE, Wis. -- Interstate barriers will soon be going up along parts of I-90/94 in an effort to save lives.

Sunday night, 79-year-old Roy Hoxie Jr. was driving a Chevy Suburban west on I-90-39 when he went into the median, drove about 500 feet and then entered the eastbound lanes.

Hoxie's suburban smashed head-on into 34-year-old Cynthia Stern's car, killing her instantly and critically injuring her 4-year-old daughter.

Stern was from Apple Valley, Minn.

Experts from the Department of Transportation say they've had concerns about that area for sometime.

The DOT recently commissioned a study of crossover median crashes in Wisconsin.

It found the interstate between Madison and Portage to be particularly deadly, the exact area of Sunday's fatal accident.

"This is an accident that is certainly unfortunate," said DOT administrator Kevin Chesnik. "We want to prevent that as much as possible."

Soon new barriers - some concrete, some - made of cables will be installed along stretches of interstate where the grassy median is particularly narrow.

While DOT experts believe it is time for barriers, they also caution there will be a downside.

"A lot of times you can recover from leaving the roadway and coming back," said Chesnick. "But if you put the barrier there, you hit it and wherever you bounce back into can create a problem."

Chesnick said the barriers can actually cause more accidents, but ones that are much less severe than those in which vehicles meet head-on at high interstate speeds after crossing over the median.

Sgt. Shelly Hutter of the Wisconsin State Patrol said it's important to note that roads don't cause crashes. She said speeding, reckless driving and following too closely are the main problems.

Still, the DOT administrator believes barriers may have kept people from dying over the weekend.

The crash is still under investigation.

Investigators believe Hoxie may have had some kind of medical emergency that caused him to lose control of his vehicle.

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