



## OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**December 7, 2001**

### **ODOT/Columbus Launch High-Tech Tool to Aid Motorists, Reduce Congestion**

(COLUMBUS) — Central Ohio motorists frustrated with traffic tie-ups and concerned about growing delays are getting a new high-tech tool in the fight against congestion.

Next week, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the City of Columbus will launch the Freeway Management System (FMS), which uses advanced technologies such as pavement sensors, cameras, ramp meters and overhead message signs to better manage traffic flow and respond to accidents more quickly.

"Technology will eventually change the way we commute in Columbus," said Jack Marchbanks, ODOT District 6 deputy director. "As it becomes more difficult to expand our highways to accommodate growth, we're finding creative ways like the FMS to move more people and goods on our existing streets and highways."

The U.S. Department of Transportation says these management systems can increase a highway's ability to carry more cars and trucks by 15 to 25 percent.

That ability will become increasingly important in the future. By 2020, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission estimates an additional 400,000 people are expected to move into the region.

The \$10-million "intelligent transportation system" will initially monitor and manage traffic on Interstate 71 between Polaris Parkway and I-71/I-70 split downtown. The highway corridor was chosen because it's one of the most heavily traveled, congested corridors in the city, serving about 160,000 vehicles daily.

Other phases are expected to become operational over the next five years, eventually covering all Columbus freeways. The estimated cost is \$32 million.

"The importance of jurisdictional cooperation was one of the key lessons from the Congestion Summit the Mayor (Michael B. Coleman) hosted in January," said Linda K. Page, director of the Columbus Department of Public Service. "Cooperative efforts like the one bringing the Freeway Management System to Columbus is one of several such projects that will help alleviate traffic congestion today, tomorrow and in the years to come."

The system uses electronic sensors in the pavement to detect slowdowns. Operators at the city's Traffic Management Center downtown then use cameras along the freeway to verify the problem and alert emergency crews who can respond and clear the freeway. Ramp meters are also used to regulate the flow of traffic onto the freeway during congested periods.

In addition, the system puts traffic information directly in the hands of motorists who need it. Motorists are warned of slowdowns via message signs mounted over the freeway. The signs will relay information to motorists about traffic conditions, travel times, accidents and road construction.

The signs are located a mile or more before key decision-making points along the highway giving motorists time to change their commute routes. Signs are located at:

- I-71 southbound near Polaris Parkway
- I-71 southbound between Hudson Street and 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- I-70 westbound at Linwood Avenue
- I-70 eastbound at Mound Street

In a few months, motorists will also have access to a Web Site, where they can view real-time traffic from freeway cameras and projected travel speeds along the corridor.

Major cities such as Atlanta, Chicago and Seattle operate similar Freeway Management Systems, but Columbus will be the first in the nation to link freeways and city streets.

“Because the system is tied into the city’s computerized traffic signal system, we can adjust the signal timing on nearby city streets to accommodate any traffic diverted from the freeway during congested periods,” said Page. “No other system in the country has that ability.”

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