

I-4 ramp changes designed to help drivers

Left turn lane will be added at Michigan Street

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Drivers who have taken the Michigan Street exit off of I-4 West this week you may have noticed some changes.

I-4 Ultimate project managers said these ramp changes are helping drivers travel around the City Beautiful.

"We did a minor traffic shift to push traffic out away from the existing bridge a little bit. And the reason we did that was to create space to build the new widened I-4 Westbound bridge over Michigan Street," I-4 Ultimate area two project manager David Ballard said.

Another change that drivers have benefited from immediately is the addition of a left hand turn lane at Michigan Street.

"And so when we made this shift to create room for the bridge construction we went ahead and added a second left turn lane to shorten the distance that traffic was backing up from the light there at Michigan," Ballard said.

The lane was included as part of the shift after project managers noticed back up overflowing onto the highway from the Michigan exit. The challenge became how to get those stagnant cars off the interstate.

Adding another lane was the clear solution, officials said.

"(It) allows more people to store closer to the light, they don't back up as far and back up into I-4 which was really the safety concern," Ballard said.

From the hospital and medical facilities to area businesses, Michigan is a high-volume exit for commuters, particularly in the morning.

“There's a lot of traffic that makes that left turn movement particularly in the morning rush exiting there to go to work,” Ballard said.

While this new configuration should continue to improve commutes for now, the permanent one promises to be even more of an upgrade.

“In the final configuration Michigan and Kaley (Avenue) interchange really functions as one interchange,” Ballard said.

The combining of Kaley and Michigan is going to be key because the way it is now the two ramps are too close, which makes the weave distance on the highway too short.

Ultimately, there will be less exits on I-4 but they will function much better.

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