

More big changes coming to messy Maitland, I-4 interchange

2 offramps to open, 1 traffic light to be eliminated

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MAITLAND, Fla. - Steamrollers will finish paving the new offramp Tuesday night from eastbound I-4 from downtown onto westbound Maitland.

The existing ramp takes drivers through a gentle curve to the left.

The new ramp, opening Wednesday morning, will take drivers sharply looping to the right but the ramp will end in merge lanes onto westbound Maitland rather than at a traffic signal.

"Motorists will continue to exit on the right, but instead of depending on a traffic signal like before, they will now need to cautiously merge onto Maitland Boulevard," Florida Department of Transportation spokesman Steve Olson said.

FDOT warned drivers to look out for the change.

"This is a dramatic change," FDOT spokesman Dave Parks said. "This will be the sixth ramp we've changed here since July so we're asking drivers coming through this area dealing with congestion [for patience] and now they're having to deal with a new ramp. We understand it's difficult and challenging, but we're hoping they're starting to see some tangible results.

"The big leap of faith is they have to drive past the exit they've been using for years. They've got to go past Maitland Blvd, then know the ramp is going to be there, and loop up and around and get on Maitland Boulevard."

The other change, a new offramp onto westbound Maitland Boulevard for drivers on westbound I-4 (from Seminole County), is scheduled to open Dec.16.

"The new ramp will require motorists to exit nearly a half mile sooner," Olson said. "The new ramp will mitigate merging hazards and promote safety."

The new ramp will allow westbound I-4 drivers to exit either onto Maitland Boulevard or directly onto Lake Destiny Drive, giving them direct access to Maitland Center and the Sheraton hotel.

Thousands of drivers cram into the office parks of Maitland Center every day from I-4.

Currently, if they are exiting westbound I-4, they must first turn onto west Maitland Boulevard at a traffic signal and then turn right onto Lake Destiny Drive at a second traffic signal while navigating construction.

"It's difficult to get off and turn into the park, bumper to bumper traffic," said Patricia McCarthy, who works in Maitland Center. "That's great. I'm sure all my co-workers will be pleased about that [the new offramp onto Lake Destiny Drive]."

News 6 anchor Erik von Ancken asked FDOT if the changes would ease some of that traffic.

"This will help some of the drivers because instead of bringing eastbound and westbound I-4 traffic to one signal, we're separating out the drivers coming from the downtown area," Parks said. "And for the folks who work in Maitland Center business community, if you're coming from Seminole County you'll be able to exit onto it without ever having to get onto Maitland Boulevard as you exit I-4."

"If you're headed to the Sheraton or some of buildings, you'll be able to come right off exit ramp and get directly into the office park. So that's one group of commuters that will see a benefit."

FDOT is rebuilding the entire Maitland- I-4 interchange, raising Maitland Boulevard over I-4. Construction on the interchange is scheduled to be completed in 2018.

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