

ACHD has new tech to help with traffic flow

Dean Johnson, KTVB 5:52 PM. MST December 13, 2017



(Photo: KTVB)

We all know the headache of sitting in rush hour traffic. In fact, the United States Department of Transportation's Beyond Traffic 2045 Initiative says, each American, on average, spends about 40 hours in traffic each year.

However, thanks to new technology coming to Ada County, your commute time every night could be getting shorter.

Over the course of the next two years, ACHD will be upgrading their technology that controls when traffic lights go from red to green.

Currently, the software is in place on eight signals along Chinden Boulevard from Locust Grove to Highway 16 and allows ACHD engineers to make real-time changes, like timing or troubleshooting issues, right from a desktop.

"Having the controllers on our fiber optic network, we're able to look at the data at our desk basically and we make the time and changes at our desk," traffic engineering manager with ACHD Shawn Martin said.

The old process consisted of sending out someone to gather the data, bringing it back, analyzing it, making the changes, and then going back out into the field.

"It would take a couple weeks process versus something now we can do in one day," Martin said.

ACHD put the new system to the test at those eight stop lights along Chinden, travel time was reduced from a little over 10 minutes to just under eight minutes for the five-mile stretch.

"We can look at stuff that happened this morning and then we can make adjustments today. So we can see what cars and how many arrived on green versus how many arrived on red, look at the data and then make the changes," Martin said.

The agency is also replacing their video detectors, which were impacted by fog.

"If it can not see, it goes into what we call a recall mode, where it just assumes cars are there. So it will give you maximum green time whether the car is there or not," Martin said.

What will soon be in place are radar detectors, which see right through the fog.

"They can bounce the radar back through the fog and then detect if the vehicles are there," Martin said.

Over the next two years, the \$5 million project, half of which is coming from a federal grant, will be placed at 82 intersections across Ada County.

Some signals along Overland Road, Ten Mile Road and Eagle Road are expected to receive the new technology in 2018. Franklin Road and Fairview Avenue are expected to have the technology in place at some intersections by the end of 2019.

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