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ITD activates variable speed limit signs on Eagle Road

MERIDIAN – The Idaho Transportation Department will activate new variable speed limit signs Thursday, Aug. 6, on Eagle Road between Fairview Avenue and Chinden Boulevard, marking the next step in a pilot project to improve safety along one of the Treasure Valley's busiest corridors.

The posted speed limit will initially remain at 55 mph at all times. This introductory period will allow drivers to become familiar with the new electronic signs while ITD addresses any technical issues and crews remove the existing static speed limit signs.

Beginning Monday, Aug. 17, the system will become variable. The posted speed limit will be reduced from 55 mph to 45 mph during weekday peak travel periods from 7 to 9 a.m. and 4 to 6 p.m. The speed limit will return to 55 mph outside those periods.

Eagle Road carries more than 60,000 vehicles each day, making it a critical route for Meridian and surrounding communities. The variable speed limit system is designed to improve safety during periods of heavy congestion, when traffic conditions can vary significantly between lanes.

The targeted speed reductions are intended to create more consistent speeds across lanes, particularly when some lanes are slowed or stopped while others continue moving at higher speeds.

"Eagle Road is a complex corridor, and congestion can create significant differences in speed from one lane to another," District Engineer Jason Brinkman said. "This system gives us another tool to respond to those conditions and encourage safer, more consistent travel speeds."

This is one of the first applications of variable speed limits on a signalized urban highway in the United States. Similar systems in other states have demonstrated safety benefits, including reduced crash rates during congested conditions.

The project was developed in coordination with the city of Meridian, local law enforcement and community partners. It builds on other recent safety improvements along the corridor, including the permanent closure of three unsignalized left-turn movements earlier this year.

“We appreciate the Idaho Transportation Department listening to our concerns and developing this variable speed corridor to reduce speeds and make Eagle Road safer,” Meridian Mayor Robert Simison said.

The pilot project will be evaluated over the next two years. ITD will monitor performance data and public feedback to determine the system’s effectiveness and inform future decisions.

For more information, visit the project website.