

OPINION

EDITORIALS

Doing something about traffic

Re "Taking the road less costly to ease gridlock,"
Jan. 18

Caltrans traffic engineers are first going to operate the expanded 5-110 interchange only on weekdays between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. This means drivers will have to watch their clocks and calendars so they don't try to merge left into the new, second "dynamic lane" at, say, 2:55 p.m. or 7:05 p.m. — or any time on a jammed weekend — while they're also trying not to rear-end or sideswipe somebody.

Later, the engineers will switch the extra lane off and on depending on congestion. It'll be Christmas all year 'round with lights blinking on and off.

The word "dynamic" always gets engineers all giddy. But I can't be the only one who thinks Caltrans is imposing a complex hypothesis on simple reality. There will be even more confusion, and more accidents, as drivers try to time when to use that extra lane and when not to.

WILLIAM LEGRO
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The Times' report on the dynamic lane Caltrans installed at the 5-110 interchange makes a deep point. There are cheaper, better options than adding pavement. Much new capacity can be harvested from better management of the road facilities we already have.

Electronic congestion pricing, high occupancy/toll lanes and LADOT's wide-area adaptive signal control are also examples of relatively low-cost opportunities to increase both flows and level of service.

Combine these new technologies with the ambitious inter-jurisdictional coordination public authorities delivered after, for example, the Northridge earthquake, and we can quickly and substantially increase available traffic capacity.

We are much better off spending millions on better managing roads than billions on rail systems that cannot help us.

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