



Collier County Government

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Traffic Signal Upgrades Highlight Flashing Yellow Arrow

In traffic signal language, red means stop, green means go and yellow means caution. Now there is a slightly modified version of this language in the works. The Collier County Transportation Engineering Department recently activated traffic signals at two locations that include a flashing yellow arrow. This new style of signal means turn with caution. Signs posted next to the new signals advise drivers that they are to yield to through traffic when the arrow is flashing yellow. The signals are over the left turn lane to facilitate left turn movements.

In December 2009, after extensive testing, the Federal Highway Administration authorized use of flashing yellow arrows nationwide. A study conducted by the National Cooperative Highway Research Program determined that drivers had fewer crashes with flashing yellow left-turn arrows than with traditional yield-on-green signal configurations.

The two locations where the new signals have been installed are at the intersection of Livingston Road and Veterans Memorial Boulevard and at the intersection of Livingston Road and Ravina Way/Learning Lane. These two locations had what are commonly known as school signals since they serve the neighborhood schools of Veterans Memorial Elementary and North Naples Middle School, respectively. As school signals they were mainly operational during school opening and dismissal times. Neighboring communities requested the signals become operational full time and the county has recently complied as well as updated the signals.

Since traffic is heavy for only a small portion of the day during school start and dismissal times, and gaps for left turns are much more frequent during other periods of the day, it makes these two locations prime candidates for the new style of signals. During peak periods when schools are in session, the left turn signal can be displayed in a “protected only” mode (Red Left Arrow, Yellow Left Arrow, and Green Left Arrow). During off peak times and in the summer when school is not in session, the Flashing Yellow Arrow can be used to provide a protected/permitted display. If the traffic volumes are very low, the protected phase can be eliminated and the signals can run in the “permissive phase only” for left turns.

These new type of signals are already in use in other locations within Florida as well as in other states. The use of the flashing yellow arrow is covered by the Florida Driver’s Handbook and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) will soon be issuing a directive to install four-section signal heads on all state traffic signal installations, where appropriate, as part of new construction and major upgrades.

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Below is a brief question and answer list regarding the new signals.

How does a flashing left-turn arrow work?

A flashing yellow arrow means left turns are permitted, but drivers must first yield to oncoming traffic and pedestrians, and then proceed with caution. The flashing yellow arrow does not replace the solid yellow arrow and its meaning; it is similar to a green “ball” indication as a signal for a yielding left turn. It is easier for drivers to remember that: a flashing yellow arrow = turn with caution.

How should drivers approach a flashing yellow left-turn signal?

Drivers should stop at the intersection, and yield to oncoming traffic and to pedestrians. If and when it is safe, make your left turn and proceed through the intersection. When the available time for the flashing yellow arrow ends, the solid yellow left-turn arrow begins. The solid yellow retains its standard meaning: the left turn signal is about to go to red and drivers should prepare to stop, or prepare to complete their left turn if they are in the intersection.

Why not use a solid green light instead of the flashing yellow arrow?

The flashing yellow left turn arrow allows the programming of the left turn movement as protected only (movement on green arrow only) during certain times of the day such as “peak hours” when the number of gaps in the approaching traffic is limited, and still be able to use protected and permitted left turns during the other times of the day when gaps in the approaching traffic are available, while at the same time communicating the “caution” message to drivers. The flashing yellow left-turn arrow will only be operational when traffic volumes permit, typically during non-rush hours. This could help reduce greenhouse gas emissions since vehicles will not have to wait on the red arrow when no traffic is approaching in the other direction.

Signal phases:



Red: STOP.



Steady yellow arrow: The left-turn signal is about to change to red; prepare to stop, or prepare to complete your left turn if you are within the intersection.



Flashing yellow arrow: Left turns permitted. Yield to oncoming traffic and pedestrians. [Oncoming traffic has a green light.]



Green arrow: Safe to turn left. [Oncoming traffic must stop.]

Collier County traffic engineers will continue to monitor the operations on Livingston Road at the two aforementioned intersections and if proven successful and acceptable to the Collier County users, drivers may soon see these signals at other intersections throughout the county.

For further information contact the Growth Management Division at 239-252-8192 or by e-mail at trafficops@colliercountyfl.gov.

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