

Congratulations To London City for Proper Maintenance on Veterans Memorial Parkway

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While I complain a great deal about improper actions of various official entities in the realm of motor vehicle safety, there are occasions when applause is due for a job well done.

In April, 2010 I had raised the issue of dangerous edge drop-offs that existed on Veterans Memorial Parkway just north of River Road and south of Hamilton Road. Recall the photo below that was taken on April 19th.



The edge drop-off was about 4 1/2 inches. This was not acceptable for a busy expressway that normally carries over 20,000 vehicles per day.

My comments were also televised on our local Rogers news program (First News) at about May 5th, 2010.

The upshot of this is that last week the City of London brought their road crew to the site and re-graded the shoulders on both sides of the highway. The important thing that I want to high-light is that they compacted the gravel that they re-graded. Here is a view of the result from essentially the same location as where the photo was taken on April 19th.



I performed my famous "foot test" on this gravel. Meaning that I simply stepped on the gravel to see how far my shoe became compressed into the gravel. I can say with great admiration that my shoe did not leave any distinguishable impression. The surface of the re-graded gravel was as hard as a rock. Wow, A terrific job. For so many years I have watched as various roadway jurisdictions have created greater safety problems by stirring up the gravel and causing greater drag on a vehicle's wheel than if they had left the edge drop-off as dangerous as it was. Everyone seemed to be oblivious to the danger that was obvious to me from examining numerous loss-of-control collisions from such conditions. Someone at the City works department woke up and they should be congratulated.

Now, I am not saying that all the problems have disappeared. We are still left with an excessive slope in the shoulder but at least the first metre or so of the shoulder is relatively flat. Beyond that however we are still left with the conditions I spoke about

earlier as demonstrated below.



You can see my carpenter's level and an angle finder in the above photo. A close-up of the angle is shown in the photo below.



You should note that the angle is about 22 degrees and that is certainly excessive. Now there may be reasons for this. They created a narrow median which will result in vehicles travelling through it and colliding with vehicles coming in the opposite lanes. To compensate they have included this enormous elephant trap to drag vehicles down into the depths of the median and prevent them from emerging back out on the other side. This is why we have the excessive cross-slope. But there is a danger that you will increase the chance of a rollover when you have these excessive slopes. A loss-of-control typically leads to a vehicle sliding sideways before it rolls over. When a vehicle slides sideways on this 22 degree slope it will increase the likelihood of rollover.

And recall that the painted edge line at the southbound passing lane next to the median is in fact at the asphalt edge. Another bad decision when they built the road to save money. You can see how all these problems were created when someone thought they could save some money by having narrow medians and narrow lanes on an expressway and no one was there to say this will cause problems in the future. There is no excuse by suggesting that this decision was made in the distant past. My recall was that this expressway was built in the 1980s when I was still at the UWO Accident Research Team and I was horrified when I saw what was going on. Whoever made that decision made it at a time when there was ample evidence of problems that would occur. For example right at that same time there were numerous articles and presentations on local news agencies talking about the numerous median-cross-over collisions that were taking place on Highway 401 - specifically in the narrow median area west of Woodstock through to Windsor. An inquest was held in 1989 to force the completion of a concrete New Jersey barrier to prevent these incidents. And the planners for Veterans Memorial Parkway were making their decisions right in the midst of all that. And the City is now reaping the difficulties of that decision by trying to come up with a solution that is not easily available.