



Report blames road design for third of serious crashes

By Gene Park

Three major factors are associated with fatal vehicle accidents, according to a recent study by the nonprofit group The Road Information Program: driver behavior, vehicle characteristics and roadway design.

I'm sure I could write an entire novel about driver behavior. Scratch that — I'm sure we all could write a novel about driver behavior.

My colleague Dan Nakaso focused on potholes in a Thursday article on the report, a timely piece considering all the damage the recent rain has done. But the report is much more comprehensive.

The TRIP study, released Thursday morning, makes special note of roadway design as a possible contributing factor to about a third of all fatal and serious traffic crashes in Hawaii.

They even attach a dollar figure to it. The cost of serious Hawaii crashes in 2010 in which roadway design may have been a factor was about \$255 million, the report said.

Traffic crashes could be reduced with improvements such as adding turn lanes, removing or shielding obstacles, adding or improving medians, widening lanes and shoulders, improving intersection layout and providing better road markings.

The lack of turn lanes is something I've grown used to here. But until a visiting friend told me how strange it seemed to her, I had never noticed the prevalence of the problem.

In addition, Hawaii is seeing a lot of wear and tear on its streets. Vehicle travel in Hawaii increased 24 percent from 1990 to 2010, to 10 billion miles from 8.1 billion miles. Our population also saw a 24 percent

increase, and the study states vehicle travel will only increase by an additional 25 percent.

The study lists the 25 most deteriorated major roadways around the state:

» On Oahu 10 were on the list, including the H-1 freeway from Kalihi to Puowaina, several stretches of Kamehameha Highway, and Farrington Highway from the Dillingham airfield to Puuiki.

» Hawaii island had 11, including the worst road, Hawaii Belt Road to Laupahoehoe, Akoni Pule Highway from Maulili to Pololu Valley, and a nearly 5-mile stretch of Mamalahoa Highway.

» Maui County has two roads on the list: Honoapiilani Highway on Maui and Kamehameha V Highway on Molokai.

» And Kauai has two roads listed: Kuhio Highway and Nawiliwili Road.

The most damning statement in the study is that 62 percent of Honolulu's major roads are in poor condition, the third-worst statistic among large U.S. cities.

Tripnet.org has the entire report available for download. See the entire list, and let me know if you think the report missed any roads. Somehow I'm sure you could write an entire novel about it.

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