

DID YOU KNOW???

LEFT LANE HOGGERS FRUSTRATE OTHER DRIVERS

East Main St. Rd. (US Route 11) on the east end of the Village of Malone is a four-lane main highway. For eastbound (EB) traffic, there are two lanes from the Porter Rd. to the Brainairdsville Rd (CR 24), about 8/10 of a mile. For westbound (WB) traffic, there are two lanes from the just prior to the Brainairdsville Rd. to Raymond St., a distance of 1.2 miles. However, for EB traffic that continues beyond the Brainairdsville Rd. and for WB traffic traveling beyond Raymond St. they must get into the left lane prior to these points, as the right lane in both cases must turn right.

This leads to a problem, and often a violation of a vehicle and traffic law (VTL) that many drivers are unaware of. The dilemma that through drivers face is when to get into the left lane in order to continue past the two above mentioned intersections. What too often happens is that drivers move into or stay in the left lane the entire distance, knowing that when they get to the Brainairdsville Rd. driving east or to Raymond St. traveling west, they will be in the through lane.

VTL section 1120 (b) is the law many violate. Basically this law prohibits driving in the left lane at less than the normal speed of traffic. Thus, if a faster vehicle comes upon a left lane hogger, they must return to the right lane or be in violation of VTL. Of course, this law is most understood when traveling on interstate highways.

Back to E. Main St. Rd., normal traffic is not that heavy, and any through driver need not be concerned that they will be "boxed out" of the left lane if they wait until the point of the regulatory signs telling motorists that the right lane must turn right, which is around the Market Barn for EB traffic and inside the village line for WB traffic.

This is not just a Malone problem. More states are moving to impose higher fines and additional restrictions for drivers who use the left lane on highways as a regular driving lane rather than for passing, according to a story in the Pew Charitable Trust's "Stateline" news report. Pew said Oklahoma, Oregon and Virginia are acting to join other states that are cracking down on drivers who stay in the left lane and force others to use different lanes to move around them. Backers cite the safety risks the practice causes as other drivers show frustration over having the left lane blocked and as they try to get around by shifting in and out of other lanes. And they say the practice impedes the smooth flow of traffic on crowded roads.

While all states require slow vehicles to keep right, they do not all specifically require drivers to get out of the left lane after overtaking another motorist or set penalties for failing to do so. Pew said a new bill that passed the Virginia House of Delegates would levy a \$100 fine for left-lane motorists driving slower "than the normal speed of traffic" and for drivers staying in the left lane when they are not passing another vehicle.

So, the next time you find yourself hogging the left lane, try using the right lane until close to where the right lane must turn right, and then move into the left lane.

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