

New technology to help CATA avoid heavy traffic

By Katrina Wehr
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

CATA is taking its technology to new heights once again — this time in an attempt to avoid abrupt stops at quickly changing traffic lights along North Atherton Street between Rolling Ridge Drive and Valley Vista Drive.

The latest addition to the Centre Area Transportation Authority's (CATA) fleet of 61 buses is a system called "transit signal priority" (TSP). CATA General Manager Hugh Mose said.

The system allows traffic lights to detect when a bus equipped with a TSP transmitter is near an intersection. If the light is about to change from green to yellow, it will delay the switch until the bus can pass through, Mose said.

The project is a joint effort between CATA and the Pennsylvania Department of

Transportation (PennDOT) to improve traffic flow along the North Atherton Corridor, said Marla Fannin, public information officer for PennDOT District 2.

While riders may not see a noticeable difference in the amount of time it takes for the buses to travel their routes, prolonging the green lights has other benefits, Mose said.

"I don't want to raise expectations that the system is going to cut the amount of time it takes to get from North Atherton to the downtown area in half, but there are other, harder-to-quantify benefits in addition to saving time," Mose said.

Since the buses won't be starting and stopping as often, the new system will help them to conserve energy and cut down on engine wear and tear, he said.

The traffic signal system is something CATA has wanted to implement for more than 10 years,

Mose said. But due to a lack of funding, he said the project has had to be put on hold until now.

When PennDOT decided to improve 17 intersections along North Atherton Street, CATA took the opportunity to outfit the intersections with TSP technology, Mose said.

In addition to the TSP technology, PennDOT is also installing closed-circuit camera systems at some intersections, along with other components to monitor traffic flow.

Installation of the TSP system is already underway, Mose said, and is expected to be complete by the end of the calendar year. Testing of the system should be finished by February of 2011, and barring any technical difficulties, should be fully functional in spring, he said.

The North Atherton Corridor experiences a high volume of traffic, especially when school is in

session, Fannin said. That volume increases even more during home football weekends, and the upgrades should allow for smoother traffic flow along the corridor, she said. The TSP system, exclusively, will be installed in 15 intersections along North Atherton Street, Fannin said.

A spread spectrum radio system will allow the lights to sync up with one another — as one light changes, the others will change to green as well, Fannin said.

The TSP system isn't entirely new, however. Alpha Fire Company has been using a version of the system on its fire trucks and emergency vehicles for a number of years, Fire Administrator Rusty Schreiner said.

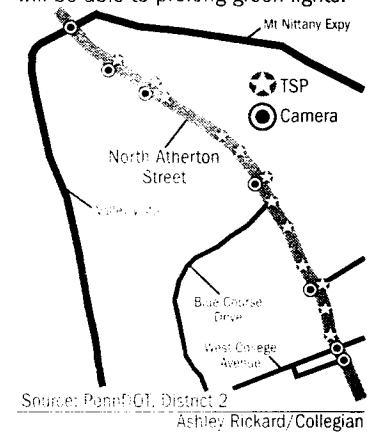
Alpha's system allows it to request green lights at any point in the light cycle, while CATA buses can only request to prolong green lights.

The new intersections on North Atherton Street will be additions to the intersections Alpha already has in its system, Schreiner said.

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Intersection update

CATA buses on North Atherton Street will be able to prolong green lights.



Collegian file photo

A student writes his opinion on a box in front of the Pattee Library on last year's Constitution Day, Sept. 18, 2009. This year's Constitution Day is set to take place today starting at 9 a.m. Students can weigh in on topics like the so-called Ground Zero mosque.

Students set to speak out to celebrate Constitution

By Sarah Peters
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

The proposed mosque near Ground Zero is miles from State College, but many Penn State students have strong opinions on the topic. Today, they have a chance to exercise their First Amendment right.

Students can write their opinions about current hot-button issues in chalk from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. today on four- to five-foot high chalkboard blocks on Fisher Plaza, said Jeremy Cohen, coordinator of Penn State's annual Constitution Day celebration.

The blocks will have questions written on them to prompt writers, and cans of chalk will be provided.

This year's questions, based on the first and second amendments, are: "Is opposition to the '9/11 mosque' fundamentally un-American?" and "Is the right to bear arms compatible with public safety?" Cohen said.

Cohen also acts as senior associate dean and associate vice president for undergraduate education.

He said the goals of the celebration are to encourage the Penn State community to view the constitution as a set of fundamental values intended as the law of the land.

"Our goal is also to help people understand that they are 'WE the people' and that, as citizens, their values matter," Cohen said.

"Finally, our goal is to reinforce the idea that, in addition to our personal values, the constitution sets national values that all citizens have a duty to uphold."

This year, for the first time, students at Penn State's Brandywine and Mont Alto campuses also have the opportunity to voice their opinions on the blocks, he said.

This is also the first year that the

If you go

What: Constitution Day celebration
When: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Where: Fisher Plaza
Details: Students can sound off on hot-button issues and exercise First Amendment rights by writing on four- to five-foot high chalkboard blocks

University Park Undergraduate Association (UPUA) has fully partnered with the Office of Undergraduate Education's Laboratory for Public Scholarship and Democracy, Cohen said.

John Zang, UPUA representative for the College of Liberal Arts and Secretary of the Political Science Association, said the blocks are an easy way to get students to think about the rights and privileges afforded to them in the constitution that they sometimes take for granted.

Zang (sophomore-political science and economics) said issues like the ones selected for this year's blocks get students talking.

"Political conversation about rights is a civic duty," Zang said. "These are things that everyone needs to be thinking about. Otherwise, democracy becomes inefficient."

Students of Rosa Eberly, associate professor of communication arts and sciences and English, will also read "banned" books outside of the library in honor of the celebration, Cohen said.

A nonpartisan voter's registration drive will accompany the blocks, Cohen said.

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Rigel Graham/Collegian

Students visit the various recruiting booths at the Fall Career Fair on Thursday in the Bryce Jordan Center. Thursday marked the last day of the fair.

Fall Career Fair wraps up

By Alexa Agugliaro
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Maria Izzi fidgeted her fingers as she held her resume and waited in line for a nametag.

Izzi (senior-statistics) was one of thousands of Penn State students Thursday who attended the last day of the Fall Career Days.

Robert Orndorff, Penn State associate director for recruiting and employer relations, said he was pleased with not only the fair's overall turnout, but also with the "top-notch" quality of the event itself.

"Recruiters felt that it was one of the best-organized career fairs they've ever been to," he said.

"So many employers said that they were interested in recruiting students on an ongoing basis."

Though students were anxious to meet prospective employers, some said they had a burst of confidence knowing that the Wall Street Journal recently ranked Penn State No. 1 in the country for job recruitment.

"The fact that the Wall Street Journal ranked us so high is the main reason that I'm here," Izzi (senior-statistics) said.

Jeremy Conrad (senior-microbiology) said he was also optimistic about meeting the recruiters and couldn't wait to share his resume with them.

Though the total number of students at the fair could not be calculated by press time, Orndorff was certain that

Wednesday's turnout in particular was something to be proud of.

He said the number of companies who participated in the fair — which ran from Tuesday to Thursday — increased by 37 percent from last year.

Manitowoc Cranes recruiter and Penn State alumnus Jeff High said he remembered what it was like to wait anxiously for a chance to interview with a potential employer.

"It feels like yesterday that I was on the other side of the table," said High, Class of 1991. "It all comes full circle in the end. We keep the relationship going so that it is mutually beneficial to both the students and the company."

Jessica Yu, a college programs coordinator from MITRE, said Penn State students fit the bill when it comes to finding people willing to take on broad and diverse jobs.

"Only here can you find the quality of students who want to work hard and get the job done," Yu said.

Associate Director of Programming and Education Services Holly Temple said she had a chance to speak to many recruiters who said Penn State students were the best-prepared candidates they've worked with.

"Students were very articulate about what they were interested in and the employers were definitely impressed," Temple said.

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