Targeted Tubes Track Tangible Traffic Tally

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Motorists may have noticed some unusual black hoses running across sections of the Kodiak road system. Howard Helkenn works for the State of Alaska Department of Transportation as the highway data manager for central region. He said the lines were put on various parts of the road to track traffic.

-- (DOT Lines 1 : 34 "Well part of our program that we're required to do for federal highway reporting is to count the traffic and the volume that's on all of your roads. And when I say all, not your city sidestreets. We're counting the main roads that DOT is responsible for. So the tracker lines are actually rubber hoses. And those rubber hoses are connected to battery operated portable traffic counters. And they will accumulate vehicles as they drive over those rubber hoses.")

The rubber hoses are placed on the roads every three years and gather important data for federal, state and local entities.

-- (DOT Line 2 : 28 "So when we do a traffic count we can cover the entire city, both ends of the island. And that data is accumulated and we use that to not only report to the federal

highways but it's used for internal traffic design. If new roads are being projected they need to have traffic data that's traveling on the roads to build the appropriate roads. So they're very critical.")

The information is also accessible by the public, meaning someone looking to start a new business can find where the most traffic is.

-- (DOT Line 3 : 13 "It's a public collected data source, so we do have a lot of real estate companies ask for that data. Anybody looking to start up a business, first thing they as is where's the most traffic of where is the traffic.")

In general, Helkenn said Kodiak roads typically see one percent increase in traffic every three years.

-- (DOT Line 4 : 19 "You have areas that may grow for a short time, due to some type of business or some reason for the traffic to increase. Your rocket launch facility out there is obviously increasing traffic. The improved, I believe you got some new pavement out there, that always increases the traffic.")

Helkenn said the trackers were installed last week by DOT workers from Anchorage. Typically they are left on the

roads for about 7-8 days, so he guessed crews would be collecting them sometime in the coming days. The data collected, however, won't be available to the public until next spring, after the DOT has had time to review it.

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