

Newville ride-share aims to reduce Interstate traffic

By Jim Dayton

jdayton@gazettextra.com

NEWVILLE

In an effort to make the Interstate 90/39 commute a little smoother, the state Department of Transportation installed a new park-and-ride lot in Newville that opened last month.

The new lot has 122 parking stalls and is tucked between the Interstate,

Highway 59 and a Culver's restaurant just east of Edgerton. It's the first I-90/39 park-and-ride lot between Madison and Beloit, but it won't be the last—there's one planned in Janesville at the Racine Street interchange and scheduled to open in 2018.

A 2015 state study found a need for more park-and-ride lots along I-90/39. Other than the two in Rock County, the only other park-and-ride lots are in DeForest and outside La Crosse, according to the state Department of Transportation website.

The lots “encourage ride sharing, reduce congestion and promote energy conservation,” said Steve Theisen, the department's I-90/39 project communications manager.

It can take time for drivers to become aware of new rideshare lots, but with knowledge comes regular use. Theisen said hundreds of stalls are constantly filled at a park-and-ride lot in Madison near Highway 51 and Highway 12/18.

The more people who use park-and-ride lots, the less traffic on main roads, he said.

“It really goes down to reducing congestion on the Interstate or other highways ... as well as promoting energy conservation,” Theisen said. “(We're) just hoping to minimize any impacts on the traveling public by ride sharing.”

The Newville lot could be a prime location for carpooling because it's so close to Edgerton. Edgerton residents on average commute 27 minutes, among the longest in Rock County, according to Data USA.

In more urban areas, private transportation companies will use ride-share lots as pickup and dropoff points for shuttle bus services. No public transit is planned for the Newville or Janesville lots, and it would be up to companies such as Van Galder or Megabus to implement those routes, he said.

Theisen encouraged drivers to use the park-and-ride lots rather than their own makeshift locations, which he said have sprung up throughout Janesville. Park-and-ride lots are safer and more reliable because they are patrolled by law enforcement, maintained by public works departments and always lit, he said.

The Newville lot's 122 parking stalls include five handicap stalls. Most spots have a 48-hour limit, but there is a section designated for seven-day parking, Theisen said.

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