

Staying in Your Lane Just Got Easier

Wider, Brighter, Longer-Lasting Road Striping To Help Drivers Today, in Future

Caltrans' new, 6-inch-wide, highly reflective road striping was introduced on Interstate 80 through Sacramento as part of a statewide effort to restripe the 50,000-plus lane miles of state highway system in the next decade.

Motorists in many areas will notice the difference that the higher-profile striping makes on their driving experience. The new road demarcation lines, which consist of tape or thermal plastic embedded with glass beads, are replacing the longtime standard 4-inch-wide stripes.

Also disappearing, as the new striping is laid, are the raised, non-reflective pavement markers known as Botts Dots, named after the Caltrans scientist who invented them in 1953. With the advent of the new striping, the ubiquitous little bumps have outlived their usefulness as lane separators.

The wider, brighter striping debuted as part of the "Across the Top" I-80 project that made various improvements across a 10-mile section of heavily traveled interstate through the capital city. In the next few years, all of the state's 27,000 lane miles that make up the freight corridors — Interstates 5, 10, 15 and 80 — will be restriped. It is expected that all of state highway system will be restriped within a decade, funded in part by revenues from the Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017 (Senate Bill 1).

Both the thermoplastic material and tape used in striping contain tiny glass beads that enhance reflectivity, particularly when illuminated by vehicle headlamps or in rainy conditions. The materials have proven very durable, and is expected to retain a minimum level of reflectivity despite constant heavy wear.

The new striping, with its wider and brighter profile, is expected to enhance safety for older drivers and truckers, and in challenging conditions such as rain.

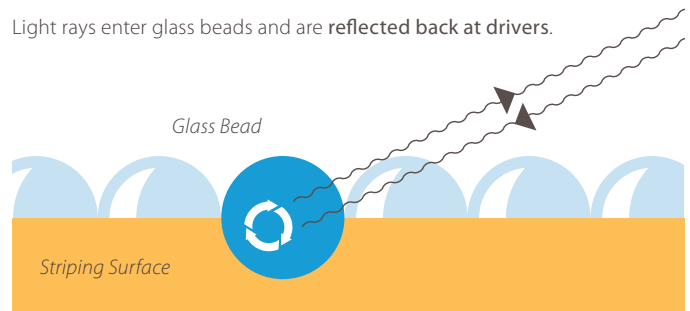
It also will be a better roadway guide for autonomous vehicles. Caltrans has consulted with auto



A section of new-generation road striping was recently laid on Interstate 5 near Orland, about two hours north of Sacramento.

Glass Bead Retro-Reflectivity

Light rays enter glass beads and are reflected back at drivers.



manufacturer Tesla and Google, two major players in the autonomous vehicle industry, about the striping changeover.

Not all parts of the state will see the new striping material. It will not be applied on roadways above 3,000 feet in elevation where snow removal equipment is used. The shovels that scrape snow and ice off the roadway also would remove the thermoplastic striping, so Maintenance Division crews will repaint those lines when damage occurs. **MM**

Source: Tony Tavares, Chief, Maintenance Division