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Improved intersection to open

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The routes 138, 18 intersection has been the bane of motorists, causing nine accidents over the last three years.

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WALL -- The Department of Transportation today will open a new ramp that allows motorists heading eastbound on Route 138 to exit onto Route 18 North without having to merge with vehicles entering the roadway.

The \$350,000 project will eliminate the shuffling of cars at the intersection by relocating the ramp over the never-completed southbound Route 18 extension.

"The project involved converting an old ramp by resurfacing a portion of that ramp, rebuilding the lower portion and realigning it so that it connects to northbound Route 18," said Wall Mayor Mary L. Burne. The new ramp "should make a significant difference and lessen the possibility of accidents occurring."

The intersection has been the bane of motorists, causing nine accidents over the last three years, Transportation Commissioner Jack Lettiere said when he announced the project in March.

Burne said that when she used to approach the exit, "I would say my prayers and hope that I was alert when I reached that intersection and when I made my turn that another car didn't just slam into me."

At the urging of Wall municipal officials and engineers, DOT had traffic engineers inspect the configuration of the ramps.

Citing safety concerns, the state moved quickly to fix the intersection, Lettiere said. Design work began in January, construction bids were taken in mid-February and by April crews were working on the new ramp.

Burne credited the Pipeline Initiative, a program mandated by Gov. McGreevey in January to expedite design and construction work, for the quick turnaround.

"Many times government, because of the process, seems to work much too slowly, but this newly created . . . pipeline certainly created the opportunity to fast track this project," she said. "From the time we informed the state that this was a serious situation, they really worked on it very quickly."