

# Meridian City Council bumps up priority of Linder Road overpass

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The Linder Road overpass would connect Overland and Franklin roads, and widening the existing roadway south of Franklin Road to two lanes per direction. This graphic was taken from a technical analysis made by the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho.  
The Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho

If a Linder Road bridge over Interstate 84 were built, experts estimate it would carry around 13,400 car trips per weekday by 2025.

The project was bumped from the 20th project on the city of Meridian's roadway and intersection priorities in 2018 to the fifth on the 2019 draft list. On Feb. 26, Meridian City Council asked for the overpass to be even higher on the list.

Members of the council and the mayor have also offered to help pay for the project. Building the overpass, with today's prices, would cost an estimated \$20 million.

The overpass is expected to relieve traffic congestion on both the Ten Mile Road and Meridian Road interchanges, and increase connectivity between north Meridian, and south Meridian and Kuna. It would be the sixth bridge over I-84 in Meridian.

The city has been in conversation with Ada County Highway District and the Idaho Transportation Department about making the overpass a reality. The highway district manages roads in Meridian, and the state department oversees the state corridors such as North Eagle Road and Interstate 84.

"It has always been known (the overpass) is something we will need to add to the community," Robert Simison, chief of staff for the Meridian Mayor's Office, said. "The question is when."

## **FUNDING THE PROJECT**

Neither ITD nor ACHD have set aside funding for the Linder Road overpass.

The overpass and several other Linder Road improvements are No. 7 on Communities in Motion 2040 2.0's state transportation system list by the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho, or COMPASS.

COMPASS finished a technical analysis in February, estimating the overpass would cost around \$20 million.

David Wallace, ACHD deputy director, said if ACHD were "ever to do this project, we'd need to scope it properly," including evaluating the right-of-way and terrain impact so the highway district could know exactly how much it needs to set aside.

"We haven't been tasked to do that yet, but we think we ought to do that soon," Wallace said.

Wallace said after evaluation, the city of Meridian would first need to get ITD on board before doing anything else. All state highways are under the jurisdiction of ITD, so the statewide organization would be in charge of building the overpass.

That would leave ACHD to widen the existing roadway south of Franklin Road to two lanes per direction and connect the roads to the freeway.

Jake Melder, spokesman for ITD, said the department will continue its conversations with ACHD and the city as more details about the funding needs for the overpass are finalized.

At a joint ACHD and Meridian City Council meeting on Feb. 21, members of council spoke about the city contributing funding to the Linder Road overpass.

“It’s important and appropriate for us to partner on major road projects like Locust (Grove) and Linder (Road),” Councilman Ty Palmer said. “Let’s just get this thing done and figure out if that dollar figure (from the city) is enough to make this happen.”

The amount the city could contribute to the project has not yet been determined. Council plans to finalize its 2019 roadway and intersection priorities at its March 12 city council meeting, according to Caleb Hood, planning division manager for the city of Meridian.

Hood said he wasn’t sure if the council would be discussing funding for the Linder Road overpass specifically.

This wouldn’t be the first time the city of Meridian contributed to a traffic project. In 2007 the city of Meridian contributed \$1 million to Locust Grove overpass.

## **COMMUNITY BENEFIT**

The Linder Road overpass would alleviate road congestion, and connect the community, said Robert Simison, chief of staff for the Meridian Mayor’s Office.

“It has always been envision as a connecting corridor,” Simison said.

Without the overpass, Linder Road traffic is diverted to Ten Mile Road or Meridian Road to cross the interstate.

An analysis by COMPASS estimates that in 2025 the overpass would decrease evening peak traffic by 19 to 22 percent on the Ten Mile Road overpass and by 11 to 17 percent on the Meridian Road overpass.

The same analysis found the overall long-term benefits of the project — improved access, improved safety, lower vehicle-operating costs — would be between \$95 million to \$185 million, according to the document.

If the overpass were built, it would make Linder Road would be the longest continuous road in Ada County, according to Simison, and would tie north and south Meridian together, Hood said.

“This is a project that can bring our community and Kuna together,” Hood said.

It would also spur economic growth in the around around the freeway, Simison said.

*Correction: This article has been changed to say the Linder Road overpass and several other Linder Road improvements are No. 7 on Communities in Motion 2040 2.0's state transportation system list by the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho, or COMPASS. The article previously referred to an outdated list.*

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