



COMPASS
COMMUNITY PLANNING ASSOCIATION
of Southwest Idaho

State Highway 55 Snake River to the City of Nampa

Priority 4

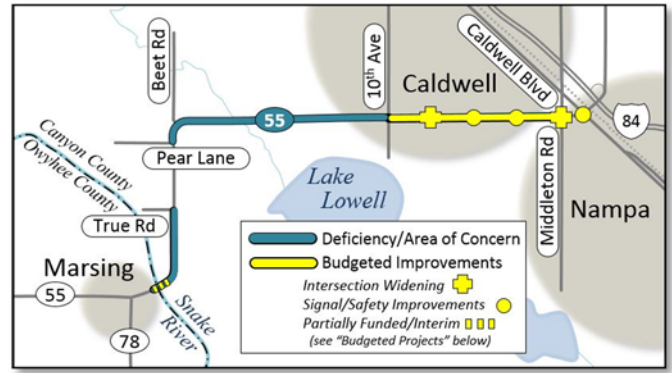
Background

In Canyon County, State Highway 55 runs north-south between the Snake River (west of Marsing) and Beet Road, and east-west from Beet Road to I-84.

It's an important freight route, providing highway access to orchards, vineyards, farms, and other agribusiness in Canyon County.

Recent improvements to this the highway include:

- True Road to Beet Road widened in 2005
- Karcher Road/Midland Boulevard/I-84 interchange built in 2006



The Corridor at a Glance

- Mostly two-lane highway, 14 miles long
 - Four lanes wide in Sunny Slope area (True Road to Pear Lane) and east of Middleton Road
- Few bike lanes, narrow shoulder on most of highway
- Sidewalks in Nampa between Middleton Road and Caldwell Boulevard, and on one side of the road connecting Caldwell Boulevard and the commercial areas north of I-84 on Midland Boulevard
- No bus routes with fixed stops, but from Farmway Road eastward, the corridor is in the service area for Flex Route #57. Several ValleyRide routes serve Caldwell Boulevard and Karcher Mall at the eastern end of the corridor.
- Park-and-ride lot adjacent to Karcher mall
- High volumes of freight traffic; important farm-to-market route
- Mostly rural corridor with suburban developments in Caldwell and Nampa city limits
- Points of interest (west to east)
 - Snake River and bridge at Marsing
 - Lizard Butte
 - Sunny Slope Orchard area
 - Gem State Adventist Academy
 - Karcher Mall and Treasure Valley Marketplace

Problem

There are two areas of State Highway 55 in Canyon County with concerns (see above map). By 2040, the expected amount of traffic on the highway will be more than it can accommodate. Traffic will move slowly at different times of the day and it will be more difficult to make turns onto and off of the highway.

Current and Future ¹	2013	2040
Population	8,903	21,796
Households	3,028	7,408
Employment	2,541	6,105

¹ Population, housing, and employment in the corridor are based on neighborhoods and other developments near the road.



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- Safety concerns have made this one of ITD’s top priority routes for safety improvements.
- Traffic between Pear Lane and 10th Avenue will likely increase by 60% between 2013 and 2040, from 15,000 vehicles per day to 24,000 per day.
 - This would be similar to the amount of traffic on Caldwell Boulevard between Ustick Road and Middleton Road.

Vehicles per Day, Pear Lane to 10th Avenue in thousands

2013	2040 Funded*	2040 Funded Plus Unfunded**
	<i>capacity/congestion***↑</i>	

* 2040 Funded reflects the 2013 regional transportation system and all the expansion/improvement projects that are funded in agencies’ approved budgets or capital improvement plans, listed in CIM 2040 (Chapter 6, Tables 6.2 and 6.3).
 ** Unfunded projects/improvements includes all the unfunded needs discussed in this summary and listed in CIM 2040 (Chapter 6, Table 6.5).
 *** This is an approximate level where there is too much traffic for the road to carry and speeds will get slower as congestion gets worse. Each road’s capacity depends on a number of variables, including truck traffic, number of driveways, and road conditions.

When a road, transit line, bikeway, or other part of the transportation system is improved, it can accommodate more traffic and, therefore, it attracts more users. Even with more traffic, traveling conditions will be better with the improvements.

Other Considerations

Roadway Users

Most of the analysis to identify the increased traffic issue is based on cars, the main mode of transportation on streets and highways. Pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles such as freight trucks, farm equipment, and buses may also share the road.

Environmental Issues

Increased highway traffic and other changes to a street or highway can impact the surrounding environment as well as the people who live nearby. Before major road projects are built, their potential effects are analyzed to make sure they meet environmental regulations as well as provide for “environmental justice,” ensuring all people can be involved and are treated fairly.²

There are a number of sensitive areas to consider in this corridor:

- wildlife habitat and hazards associated with the Snake River
- homes close to the highway in the Caldwell area
- a cemetery adjacent to the highway at Indiana Avenue
- minority and low-income population concentrations in Caldwell and Nampa

² See federal environmental justice definitions at www.epa.gov/region07/ej/definitions.htm.



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Budgeted Projects

Roadway: ITD manages State Highway 55. Cooperative efforts with the cities of Nampa and Caldwell, and the Canyon and Nampa Highway Districts have resulted in plans for the following improvements in the corridor:

- widening the highway from Middleton Road west to Elijah Drain, and later to 10th Avenue
- widening intersections at Middleton Road and Indiana Avenue
- implementing safety, signal, and other improvements at Caldwell Boulevard, Midway Road, and Lake Avenue intersections
- replacing the bridge on Snake River at Marsing

Unfunded Future Needs

Roadway: Widening the highway will increase capacity and improve safety from Marsing to True Road and from Pear Lane to 10th Avenue. The bridge replacement project listed above would replace the two-lane Snake River bridge in Marsing but not widen it; widening remains unfunded but is a recommended corridor improvement. See the ITD Corridor Study for more information.³

Bus Service/Park and Ride: The regional transit services plan, *valleyconnect*, calls for separating Flex Route #57 into four new flex routes. Flex Route #53 would serve west Nampa and south Caldwell.

- Day-long schedule, as frequent as every hour
- Smaller area but more frequent service than Route #57
- No funding yet to start Route #53

No park-and-ride lots and no fixed bus routes (with regular bus stops) are planned for State Highway 55 in *valleyconnect*.

Walking/Biking: The cities of Caldwell and Nampa have planned pathways and bike routes that would intersect State Highway 55.

- City of Caldwell
 - Lake Lowell Corridor pathway – cross near Montana Avenue
 - Florida Avenue bike route
 - East Karcher Corridor pathway – cross near Lake Avenue
- City of Nampa
 - Future pathways along Midway Road and Elijah Drain
 - Future bike route on Middleton Road

Operations, Management and Technology Projects: Aside from road widening, other actions such as improving driveways or changing the traffic signals can help improve traffic conditions. The Intelligent Transportation System plan⁴ includes upgrading traffic signals and adding closed-circuit cameras at key intersections on State Highway 55.

³ <http://itd.idaho.gov/Projects/D3/ID55Corridor>

⁴ *Final Report: Treasure Valley Transportation System: Operations, Management, and ITS* can be found online at www.compassidaho.org/prodserve/cms-intro.htm.