



US-95 BONNERS FERRY RECONSTRUCTION: STAGE 1 FAQs

January 2018

In response to comments received at the December 2017 open house for improvements from the Kootenai River Bridge to Alderson Lane (Stage 1), ITD developed this FAQ sheet.

The highway is congested on the South Hill. Why would we reduce lanes?

Reducing lanes, along with the other improvements to sidewalks and drainage, will enhance safety on US-95. The highway currently transitions from four lanes on the South Hill to two lanes at the Madison intersection where many pedestrians, primarily children, cross on their way to and from the city pool. Requiring highway users to merge this close to an intersection and a pedestrian crossing is not safe for drivers or pedestrians. By reducing US-95 to two lanes at the beginning of the South Hill, the merging process becomes safer, and pedestrians can more safely cross the highway because drivers are no longer required to simultaneously focus on merging and approaching the intersection.

Reducing lanes will allow for the designation of acceleration lanes up and down the South Hill for vehicles entering the highway. Acceleration lanes will be especially helpful for trucks turning left to head up the hill from Ash Street. By giving trucks more time to get up to speed on the South Hill, acceleration lanes improve the safety of the highway.

Vehicles often break down on the South Hill and block traffic. With fewer lanes, how will traffic continue to flow? How will emergency services be able to pass through?

Stalled vehicles can be temporarily stored in the acceleration lanes and the wide center median included in the new design. In the event of stalled vehicles on the South Hill, traffic will still be able to flow.

Why is the signal being removed when so many use it to make left turns?

The widened roadway and the aging signal infrastructure made it necessary to remove the existing signal. Analysis of the traffic at Alderson Lane determined that the signal was not justified by the low volume of vehicles, even during peak summer traffic. Traffic analysis did not justify the use of \$310,000 of taxpayers' money to upgrade the signal and the thousands of dollars that would be required for annual maintenance.

If there is no signal at Alderson Lane, how will pedestrians cross US-95?

ITD will add a new protected crosswalk at Alderson Lane, and pedestrians will also be able to use another new protected crosswalk near the Madison Street intersection at the top of the South Hill. The protected crosswalks will be equipped with pedestrian-activated high-intensity lights to bring attention to the crosswalks. The project also includes sidewalks on both sides of US-95 between Alderson Lane and Madison Street, reducing the need for pedestrians to cross the highway.

Why will the sidewalk next to the South Hill be 8 feet wide?

Since there is only one sidewalk on the South Hill, a wider sidewalk will allow for safer two-way traffic for groups of pedestrians. It will also make the removal of snow easier for city maintenance personnel. The highway is not being reduced to two lanes on the South Hill for the sake of wider sidewalks, but given the proposed changes, ITD obliged the city's request for a wider sidewalk.

Will the sidewalk improvements require the loss of private property?

Sidewalk improvements between Alderson Lane and Madison Street will require the acquisition of small slivers of property. Currently there are stakes delineating the larger, temporary easements needed to improve the existing sidewalks, but these stakes do not represent the new right of way.

Why doesn't ITD just build a bypass?

A grant-funded study initiated by the Boundary Economic Development Council and conducted by New Mobility West in 2014 found that most of the traffic on US-95 in Bonners Ferry is from local drivers traveling from place to place around town, suggesting that a bypass would not ease congestion nearly enough to justify the \$100 million price tag.

