



# Elkhorn Road to River Street

## SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY DISCUSSION #1

### OVERVIEW

In June 2020, the Idaho Transportation Department hosted a community discussion about the *Idaho 75, Elkhorn Road to River Street* project. The two-week community discussion was the first in a series of public participation opportunities for this project. Due to COVID-19 concerns, the discussion was held entirely online.

#### Purpose

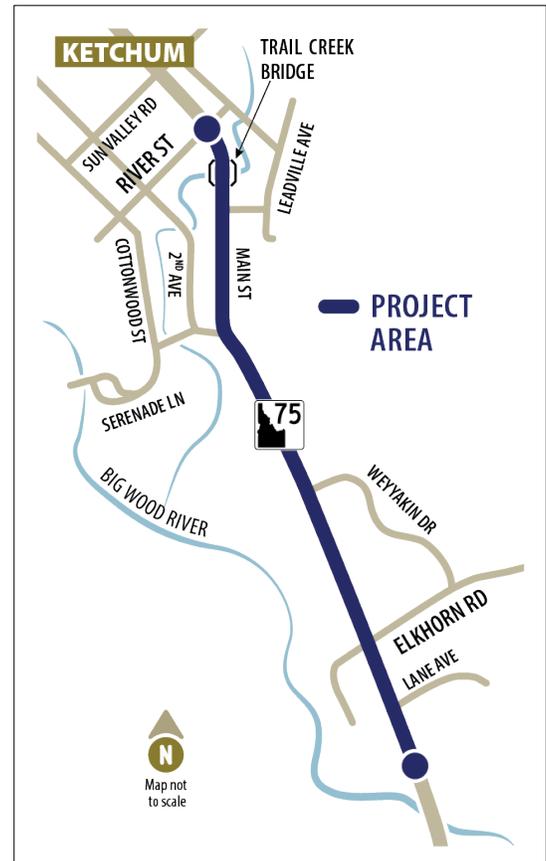
The purpose of the discussion was to:

- Introduce the Idaho 75, Elkhorn Road to River Street project.
- Gather input on what is working well and not so well on SH 75 between Elkhorn Road and River Street.
- Learn what the community likes and dislikes about the concept design from the 2008 Environmental Impact Statement.
- Gather input on how best to keep the community involved during times of social distancing.

#### Participation

During the weeks of the community discussion:

- 610 people visited the project website.
- 448 people visited the community discussion page.
- 287 people watched the video on YouTube.
- 132 comments were submitted for six discussion questions. These comments were emphasized, or “liked,” 476 times by other community members.
- ITD received 11 emails.



This document includes a summary of notification methods as well as comments and questions from the community.

## ONLINE MEETING FORMAT

Participants were invited to view information online at their convenience between June 4 and 18. Participants without online access were invited to request meeting materials by mail.

The website included a 12-minute PowerPoint presentation narrated by Nathan Jerke. Participants were then invited to respond to a series of questions. They could also “like” comments from other community members by selecting a thumbs-up icon.

**5. How best can ITD keep the community involved with the project during times of social distancing?** ^

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 The forum you are using here seems like a great one! It's easy to comment and it's nice that you can show your approval for other's comments. Plus it should reveal where the consensus lies with the community.

 the mailer info was a good reminder to use this site

ADD A COMMENT
VIEW ALL COMMENTS

*Web-based discussion format*

ITD also asked community members to suggest future strategies for involving the community if in-person gatherings were not feasible (due to COVID-19 concerns). Responses are summarized on page 4.

## NOTIFICATION

ITD used a variety of methods to invite the community to participate in the online discussion.

- **A letter was mailed to 29 elected officials and community leaders** in early June to brief them on the project and the online discussion format, invite them to participate, and ask them to share information with their colleagues.
- A member of the project team **emailed 41 property owners**, local jurisdictions and agencies in early June. ITD had met one-on-one with these individuals in January and March 2020.
- A **postcard** was distributed to 7,569 businesses and residences in Sun Valley, Hailey and Ketchum. The mailing included key stakeholders on the project database (i.e., local jurisdictions, emergency responders, agencies, community organizations, etc.).
- A half-page **display ad appeared in the Idaho Mountain Express** on June 5 and June 12.
- ITD distributed a **media release to local news outlets** on June 3. Articles about the discussion appeared in the Twin Falls Times-News, Idaho Mountain Express and Weekly News Journal.
- A calendar invitation was posted to the **project website** prior to the online discussion.
- The City of Ketchum included a notice in their **weekly “Word on the Street” email** to community members.

- ITD posted a **Facebook invitation** on June 4. The post reached 1,935 people. The City of Ketchum and Blaine County shared the invitation on their pages as well.

## KEY THEMES

ITD received a wide range of comments representing many different viewpoints. A few themes were consistent throughout the discussion:

- A diversity of opinions regarding the 2008 plan to widen the highway. While many believed four lanes would improve congestion, residents expressed concerns about safety and speeding.
- Concerns about the removal of the center turn lane between Elkhorn and Serenade.
- Strong support for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure along the highway, particularly north of Serenade.
- Several requests to improve the intersection of Highway 75 and Serenade.

A summary of the community's responses to each question begins on page 4. A transcription of all comments is included in the appendix to this document. ITD is preparing responses to questions and will post them on the project website. Additional community discussions will be scheduled later in the design process.

## SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

Community members gave numerous specific and detailed comments. A verbatim transcription of all comments is available in the appendix to this document.

This summary reflects comments from the online discussion as well as letters submitted via email.

### 1. What is working well with SH-75 between Elkhorn Road and River Street?

ITD received 20 responses to this question, which were “liked” a total of 99 times. The two overwhelmingly most-repeated responses were:

- The left-turn lane onto Serenade Lane is very helpful.
- The center turn lane north of Elkhorn is important for drivers accessing businesses and other properties.

One person said they liked the reduced speed limit. Other responses pertained to questions 2-4 and have been included with that part of the summary.

### 2. What is not working well with SH-75 between Elkhorn Road and River Street?

ITD received 32 responses to this question, which were “liked” a total of 118 times. The most often-repeated comment was:

- Between Serenade Lane and River Street, the highway lacks safe bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure for accessing downtown or schools (i.e., crosswalks, bike paths, pedestrian crossings and access to the bike path tunnel).

Additional repeated comments included:

- Congestion is a concern.
- Speeding is a concern.
- The merge from four lanes to two lanes is hazardous.
- Access on/off the highway is difficult (e.g., at Mortgage Row, Gem Street, Serenade Lane).

A few participants also mentioned concerns regarding drainage, winter snow removal, tight intersection turning, noise and perceived dangers on the Trail Creek Bridge.

### 3. What do you like about the 2008 Concept Design?

ITD received 11 responses to this question, which were “liked” a total of 58 times. The two most often-repeated comments included:

- Sidewalks are necessary on both sides of the highway between Serenade Lane and River Street.
- Please consider a roundabout at Serenade.

Additional repeated comments included:

- Concerns about a roundabout.
- Mixed opinions about widening the highway to four lanes.
- The desire to have trees planted near the roadway.
- Support for a new bridge.

#### 4. What do you dislike about the 2008 Concept Design?

ITD received 32 responses to this question, which were “liked” 119 times. In order of frequency, the most often-repeated comments included:

- Disagreement over whether four lanes were necessary.
  - Many who were opposed to four lanes mentioned speeding and/or safety concerns and suggested alternate methods such as roundabouts.
  - Some indicated it’s better to have the congestion before town (Ketchum) rather than in town.
  - Others believed that expanding the road would reduce bottlenecks and long commute times.
  - Some participants expressed specific concerns about the planned transition from four lanes to three lanes. Several asked ITD to consider constructing four lanes along the entire highway, including the Trail Creek Bridge.
  - One person questioned whether the on-street parking would be needed from Garnett St to River St and thought it would be better used for expanding SH-75 to four lanes.
- Concerns about the loss of the center turn lane and/or left-turn lane.
- Concerns that the 2008 study may be too outdated.
- A request for pedestrian access between Serenade and River Street.
- Concern that the project does not address the steep road grade near the Trail Creek bridge.

#### 5. How best can ITD keep the community involved with this project during times of social distancing?

ITD received eight responses to this question, which were “liked” 29 times. In order of frequency, the most often-repeated comments included:

- Appreciation for the online forum, especially the ability to see other comments.
- Preference for the virtual format due to convenience.
- Requests for updates via email, the Eye on Sun Valley, and the Mountain Express.
- A request for an in-person forum in order to develop shared ideas.

#### 6. Other comments or questions

ITD received 29 responses to this question, which were “liked” 53 times.

- The majority of comments provided additional detail and reasoning for previous responses.

- Many people submitted detailed questions. A list of all questions submitted during the discussion period is included on page 6.
- Additional ideas in this section included:
  - Developing “back options” to offload traffic from Main Street
  - Considering a “road diet” similar to Paris, Idaho
  - Adding a traffic signal or merge lane at Serenade Lane
  - Addressing safety issues from power lines near the highway
  - Consider a new design.
  - Mitigate the removal of trees.
  - Consider performing the construction work at night during off-peak hours.
  - Construct retaining walls south of Neil’s Way to block snow from plows.

## QUESTIONS

ITD received numerous questions during the community discussion period. Questions included:

### *Roadway width*

- Is there a longer-term plan to have four lanes from Serenade to River Street?
- How can you make this project not add to more congestion downtown?
- If you put in four lanes all the way into town, don't you just shift that congestion to the two stop lights in the middle of town? It's probably better to have the congestion before town than in the middle of town. Will this be a case where, despite the stated goal of increased safety, the project actually decreases safety for our community?
- Where is the room (on the road) for snow removal, bicycle commuting or even pedestrians?
- There are two rationales stated for the project: capacity and safety. I can see how adding more lanes adds capacity. But is the current setup unsafe? What are the statistics around that? What data do you use to justify the increased safety assertion?
- Can you add a merge lane from Serenade Road onto southbound 75?
- Can the merging be done south of the Elkhorn Road light?

### *Public involvement*

- To make sure you keep transparency, can you create an email distribution list so we can sign up to receive updates and reminders?
- How is ITD going to address public concerns (including past concerns from the 2008 plan)?
- How can the public see the number of people that feel the same way in the online discussion?

### *Maintenance*

- Is there anything being done to improve the durability of the striping paint during the winter?

- Who is responsible for snow removal on sidewalks? Will sidewalks be inaccessible during the winter? Where is the snow going to be plowed to with a wider road?
- Where is the room for snow removal, bicycle commuting or even pedestrians?

#### *Bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure*

- Have you considered moving the sidewalk from the east (by Weyyakin) to the west side between Hwy 75 and east of Baldy Ct. for access to the gas station/mart?
- Will there be sidewalks the entire length of the project on the east side?

#### *Other*

- Does the plan include conduit within the right-of-way for underground power transmission and distribution lines and any other utilities?
- Can we avoid a stop light at Serenade Lane? Can we keep a turn lane instead?
- Given this project seems designed to deliver tourists from the airport to the existing and proposed hotels at the entrance to town, how are those developments coordinating with the state? Will they be bearing their rightful costs of this project?
- Is there any way to speed the process up? Could construction be scheduled for 2023?
- What specifically is the plan for the new Trail Creek Bridge? Will the new road continue to dip down toward Trail Creek and rise up on other side to meet River Street?
- Would ITD consider building a retaining wall to increase safety for residences at Neils Way?
- Do you know who currently owns the existing parking lane located across from Gem Street? Who will legally be able to park on this lane?
- What is the smart vision and subsequent healthy development that will support growth without losing the personality of Ketchum?
- So what does this design accomplish, other than making the highway less safe for local residents?
- There are already several comments on speeding as a problem in this stretch of road. How does widening the road impact that? Usually widening a road leads to an increase in speeding. Traditional speed mitigants like speed bumps and rumble strips aren't compatible with our snowy climate. Is this going to be a case where you build a road that you know will lead to higher speeds and the community gets stuck policing it?