

POCATELLO AVE/I-86B INTERSECTION

IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP #1 SUMMARY | March 13, 2018

The Idaho Transportation Department hosted a community workshop in March 2018 to gather input on a project to improve the intersection of Pocatello Avenue and the I-86 Business Loop in American Falls. The intersection is located along a primary route for trucking and agricultural traffic, and provides a gateway to the American Falls community. In response to local concerns, ITD has begun exploring possible designs to improve traffic operations for all users.

ITD has committed to work closely with the community throughout the design process. Key stakeholders and members of the public have been invited to participate in a series of community workshops. Participants will meet three to four times to assist ITD with developing a design that best meets the needs of all stakeholders.

The first community workshop was held at the American Falls District Library (308 Roosevelt St.) from 4 to 6 p.m. on March 13, 2018. Approximately 70 people attended.

Workshop #1 purpose and notification

The purpose of the workshop was to:

- Introduce the Pocatello Avenue/ I-86B intersection project and provide background information.
- Learn the community's issues and concerns with the project and identify suggested improvements.
- Explain next steps in the project and the next workshop date.

ITD notified the community about the workshop in several ways.

- **A letter from Dan Harelson, ITD Engineering Manager** was sent to every person on the project database. The database included participants from the November 2017 open house as well as property owners, businesses, local jurisdictions, trucking and agricultural industry representatives and local residents.
- **A postcard invitation** was sent to 2,149 residences and businesses within a three-mile radius of the intersection, as well as to the project database.
- **A display ad** ran in the Power County Press and The Aberdeen Times on March 7.
- **A news release** was sent to local news outlets on Feb. 28. The Power County Press ran articles on March 7 announcing the workshop and on March 20 summarizing the workshop.
- **Reminder phone calls** were placed a few days before the workshop to everyone on the database whose phone numbers were available.

Copies of all notification materials are included in the appendix to this document.

Workshop presentation

The community workshop began with a short presentation by ITD Engineering Manager Dan Harelson. Dan introduced the project and reviewed the purpose and need; reviewed the process and schedule; and explained traffic and safety data and other design considerations. The PowerPoint slides are included in the appendix to this document.

Participants were then encouraged to discuss questions from the presentations at their tables.

Questions included:

1. What is functioning well at the Pocatello Avenue/I-86B intersection? Why?
2. What is not functioning well at this intersection? Why?
3. What intersection improvements would you suggest?
4. Do you have any other questions or comments about this project?

Participants had the opportunity to make notes on written comment sheets and on large maps of the intersection. A facilitator from ITD or RBCI led each discussion.

Approximately 70 people participated in discussion groups and ITD received 26 written comment sheets.

Key themes

Several key themes were repeated during Community Workshop #1:

- The left turn from Highway 39 to I-86 does not work well because of the stop sign. Trucks back up at the stop sign and have a difficult time climbing the hill toward I-86. This is a safety concern because some trucks do not stop to maintain their momentum and some people will attempt to pass trucks when they cannot see past them.
- Traffic flow between I-86 and the intersection currently works well.
- Pocatello Avenue works well, except during times of heavy truck traffic on Pocatello Avenue. During these times, trucks avoid the stop from Highway 39.
- The Fairgrounds Avenue intersection has heavy truck traffic and does not work well. Suggestions included closing Fairgrounds Road and building a frontage road, adding a stop sign on Fairgrounds Road, or adding a turn lane onto Fairgrounds Road or Highway 39.

A question-by question summary of input begins on page 3. Comments submitted on maps are pictured on page 6. A transcription of written comments is included in the appendix to this document.

Summary of written and verbal comments

1. What is working well at the Pocatello Avenue/I-86B Intersection? Why?

Frequent responses included:

- The free-running right from Pocatello Avenue to Highway 39 toward Aberdeen works well.
- Traffic flow through the intersection is okay. The intersection doesn't seem to be a problem.
- Traffic Flow west from I-86 to the Pocatello Avenue intersection works well.

Other notable comments included:

- Pocatello Avenue works well.
- The intersection seems safe.
- Striping (paint) and lighting are good.

2. What is not working well?

Frequent responses included:

- The left turn from Highway 39 to Pocatello Avenue (toward I-86) does not work well, particularly the stop sign.

Specific comments about this turn included:

- ✓ The "stop ahead" sign is too close to the intersection for traffic going 55 mph. *ITD evaluated this concern immediately and found the sign were placed in accordance with requirements found in the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.*
- ✓ Trucks sometimes continue past stop sign without stopping.
- ✓ The road is too narrow for trucks to maneuver around each other (i.e., if a semi is stopped at the bottom of the hill and another semi is turning left onto SH-39).
- Heavy truck traffic in town does not work well, especially during harvest.
- Trucks climbing the hill to access I-86. This is a major safety concern; people will pass trucks on either side. It is difficult to see past trucks when cars are trying to turn.

Other notable comments included:

- The yield sign is not angled correctly; it is difficult to see what lanes it applies to. *ITD evaluated this concern immediately and found the sign were placed in accordance with requirements found in the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.*
- The merge onto Highway 39 from town (on Old Hwy 30/Pocatello Ave) does not work well.
- The bypass in general is not working well; trucks have to go further and climb hill.
- Up to six trucks will back up on Highway 39 turning left on Pocatello Avenue toward I-86.
- Fairgrounds intersection has lots of trucks and does not work well.
- The speed limit is difficult to judge at the intersection.

3. What changes would you suggest?

Frequent responses included:

- Traffic on Pocatello Avenue should yield to Highway 39 traffic or stop. Remove the stop sign on the bypass.
- Build an overpass for Highway 39 traffic (over Pocatello Avenue).
- Allow free-flowing traffic on both directions of the bypass (to and from Pocatello Avenue).
- Improve the intersection of Fairgrounds Road and Airport Road.

Suggestions included closing Fairgrounds Road and building a frontage road, adding a stop sign on Fairgrounds Road, or adding a turn lane onto Fairgrounds Road or SH-39.

Other notable comments included:

- Realign the I-86 on/off ramps to better align with the Highway 39 bypass.
- Don't rule out a roundabout, especially a single-lane roundabout.
- Realign the I-86B/Highway 39 intersection as a "T" intersection.

One person suggested adding a signal.

- Don't build a roundabout.

Concerns about roundabouts included the large size (for accommodating trucks), the interaction between trucks and cars; general hassles and the Pocatello roundabout that does not seem to function well.

- Widen the Highway 39 bypass from the I-86 exit to Hillcrest Avenue.
- A stop light wouldn't solve anything; might make it worse.
- Lower the speed limit on the bypass and Old Highway 30.
- People are too nice for four-way stops. A stop sign would kill downtown business.
- Add yield signs.
- Add a turn bay for bypass traffic to come back onto Pocatello Avenue and Fairgrounds Road, allowing east-west traffic to travel without stops.
- Add a left-turn lane on Pocatello Avenue.
- Go back to the original plan to put in the original exit and business loop.

4. Do you have any other questions or comments?

Responses to this question included:

- ITD needs to address safety and visibility issues at other intersections in the area, such as Hillcrest/Fort Hall, Fort Hall/SH-39 and Fairgrounds /Airport.
- If a roundabout were installed, how long of a wait would someone have at Fairground Road and other roads?
- Do trucks stop and yield with a roundabout?

- A roundabout won't work for trucks.
- What is the average speed in a roundabout?
- Does a three-way intersection decrease the viability of a roundabout?
- Multiple-lane roundabouts are confusing and don't work.
- Is a roundabout feasible?
- A lot of approaches around the intersection need to be closed.
- A high number of trucks come out of Funk Farms and Lamb Weston's facility.
- What were the traffic counts 10 years ago at this intersection (all legs)?
- What are the traffic counts from Pocatello Avenue onto Highway 39?
- Current truck traffic avoids hill by going through town through two school zones.
- Great meeting. Good ideas to get the community to come together and make the place better.
- Add turn lane to Fort Hall Road.
- A stop light does not accomplish anything.
- Don't add any more access points on Highway 39.
- Pocatello Avenue if yielding (would result in) potential crashes.
- Flashing stop signs have helped.
- Why can't we do an overpass with a cloverleaf?

Maps from discussions

Many participants worked together to draw their suggestions on large maps of the intersection.

Map 1. Realign Pocatello Avenue to create a "T" intersection.



REALIGN POCATELLO AVE - CREATE "T" INTERSECTION.

BYPASS ~~SE~~ DOESN'T STOP IN EITHER DIRECTION

WB POCATELLO AVE (AND TOWN) LEFT TURN LANE

EB POCATELLO AVE

1 - FREE MOVEMENT TO FREEWAY

2 - STOP SIGN AT "T" TO TURN LEFT

TWO EB LANES UP TO INTERCHANGE

NO MERGE - LET VEHICLES CHANGE LANES

RIGHT LANE FORCED TO WB ON RAMP

CLOSE FAIR GROUNDS ROAD

BUILD FRONTAGE ROAD TO MEET AT "T"

Map 2. Allow free-flowing right- and left-turns from Highway 39 and I-86, with a stop sign for Pocatello Avenue traffic. These participants expressed concern with traffic at Fairgrounds Road if a roundabout were constructed.



Map 3. Realign Pocatello Avenue to form a “T” intersection. Close the Airport/Fairgrounds intersection and build a frontage road (shown in orange) to connect Pocatello Avenue and Fairgrounds Road.

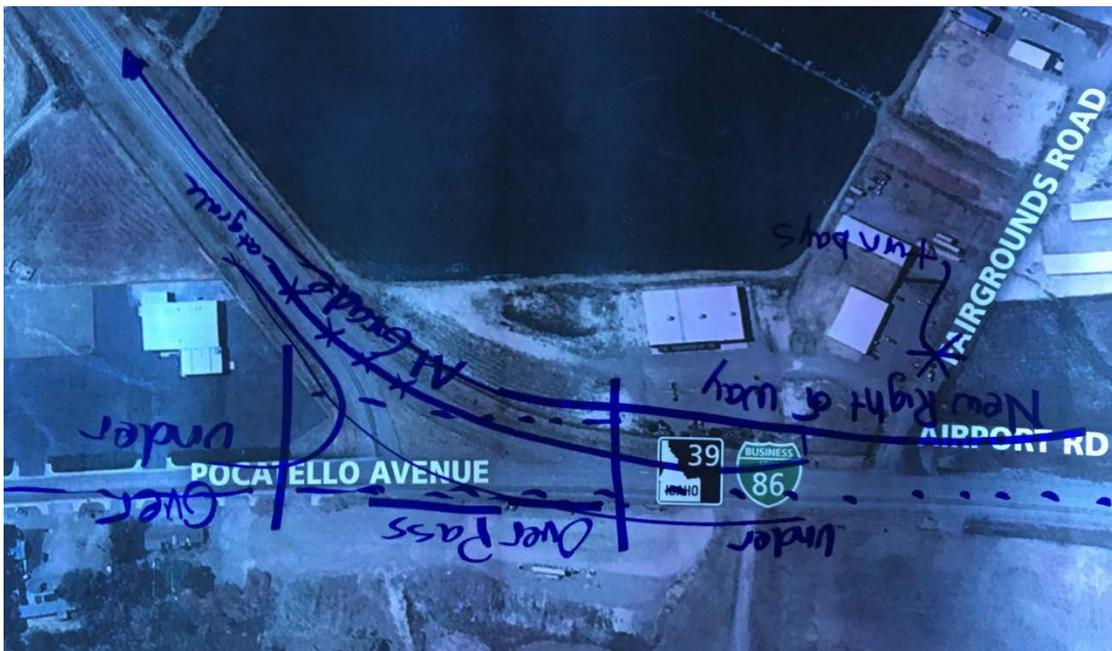


Map 4. Allow free-flowing traffic to and from the bypass and the eastern half of Pocatello Avenue. The western leg of SH-39 at the intersection would become a right-only onto westbound Pocatello Avenue. All other traffic would merge with bypass traffic.

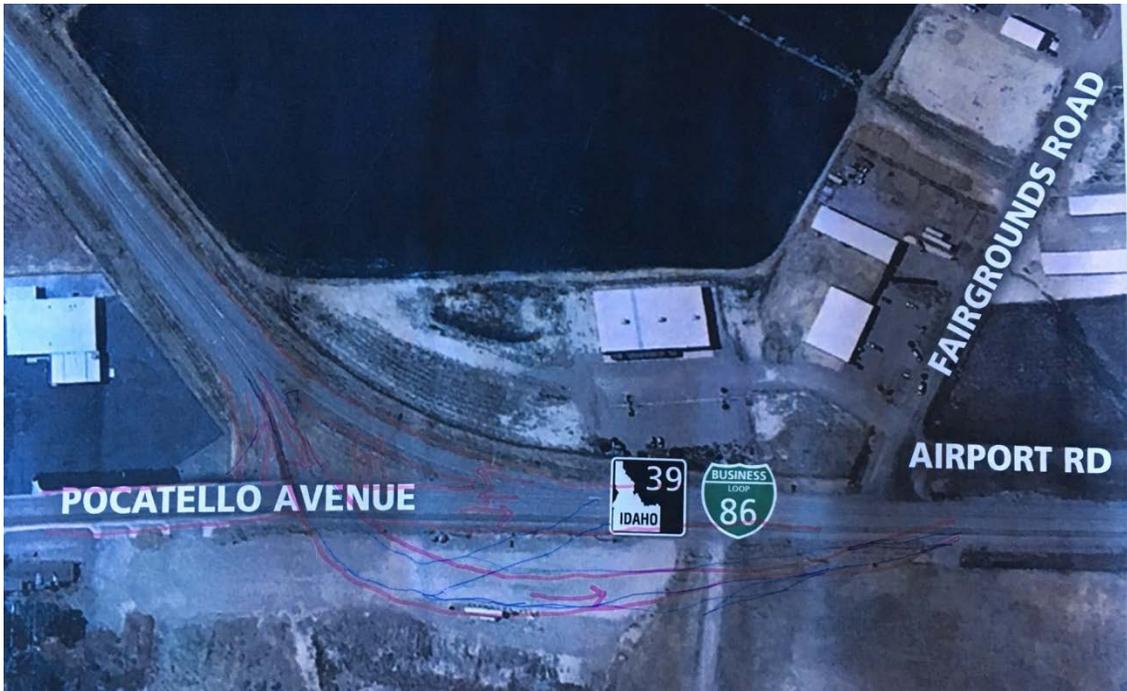
These participants believed the Fairgrounds/Airport intersection worked well.



Map 5. Add a turn bay to Fairgrounds Avenue and acquire right-of-way to construct an overpass for SH-39 traffic.



Map 6. Construct an overpass for SH-39 traffic to access Pocatello Avenue and I-86.



Map 7. No description was given for Map 7.

