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## City Council supports postponing Karcher interchange construction

By ERIN BAMER ebamer@idahopress.com Jun 6, 2017 Updated 14 hrs ago

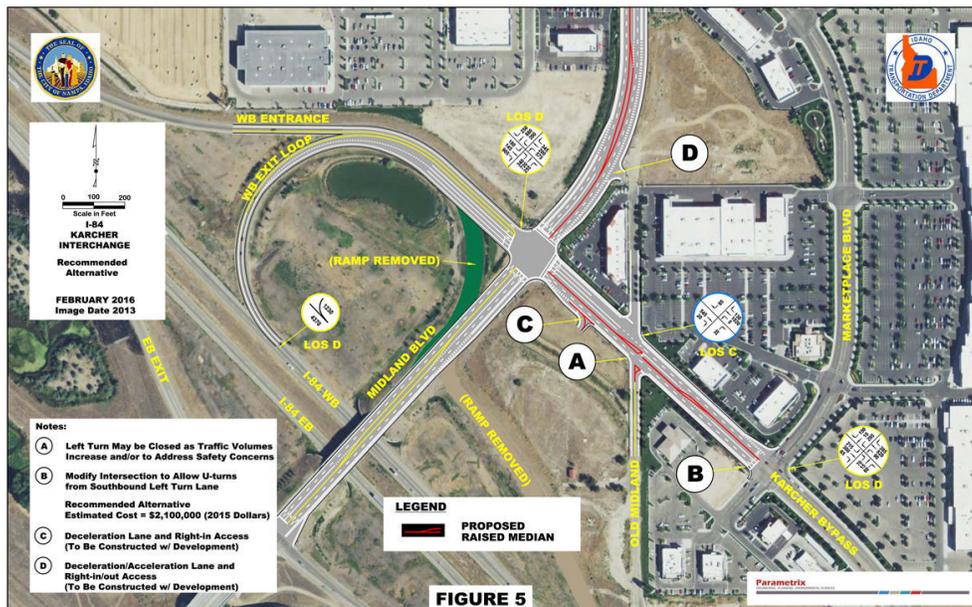
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Courtesy of ITD/City of Nampa

While the Idaho Transportation Department and City of Nampa have not announced a start date, the Karcher interchange at Interstate 84 Exit 33 will undergo construction to alleviate traffic congestion. It is hoped that construction will begin sometime this year.

**NAMPA** — The Nampa City Council on Monday supported postponing a construction project planned for the Karcher interchange due to time constraints.

Earlier this year, a \$2.85 million project to modify the Karcher interchange was approved by the Idaho Transportation Department, said Public Works Director Michael Fuss at the council's meeting Monday. The Transportation Department would fund \$2.3 million of the project, and the city of Nampa would pay the remainder of the cost, an estimated \$566,000.

Fuss said there was an obvious need for the project, considering the consistent congestion on the interchange, and with City Council's support, he moved forward in search of a bid from a contractor.

This was when the project hit a speed bump. Fuss said since the city of Nampa has more construction projects going on than any other area in the Treasure Valley, contractors are too busy to take on other projects. The interchange project received two bidders, where some other projects received none. Both bids for the Karcher interchange, however, were higher than the original estimate. The request came in for an additional \$1 million, instead of the original estimate of \$566,000.

Fuss said the good news is the city generates about \$1 million a year in impact fees and the project is up for consideration by the impact fee advisory committee. But Fuss said the current impact fees are spoken for, so they need to go back to the committee to try and get the interchange project upgraded.

Fuss said the biggest obstacle to the project is time management. With all the budgeting changes, it will take more time before the actual construction gets started. Fuss said right now the risk is too high to proceed with the project because of the upcoming winter.

"We already have congestion now," Fuss said. "The worst time of congestion is the holiday season. I think that the community would appreciate an approved interchange for the holiday season, but if the likelihood were to occur, now, we would be shutting down construction at the holiday season. So, it's bad now, I can't image how bad it would be with barrels and cones and contractors in the way in the middle of the holiday season."

Fuss recommended that the City Council cancel the project and reject the current bids. This would give the city time to consider the budget and figure out how to come up with the extra \$1 million, plus it would give other contractors the time to finish their current projects.

Councilman Darl Bruner asked when Fuss would send out the bid again. Fuss said the plan is to take bids this winter, or next spring at the latest, so that construction could begin in early 2018.

"It's an unfortunate situation," Fuss said. "I don't think there's anybody who doesn't want the project to move. But I think the potential for risk is too high for going into construction shutdown in the middle of the interchange through the holiday season."

Councilwoman Sandi Levi and Councilman Randy Haverfield voiced their support for canceling the project for the summer. The final decision will be made by the Idaho Transportation Department.

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