

State Highway 55 Beacon Light Road to Ada/Boise County Line

Priority 17

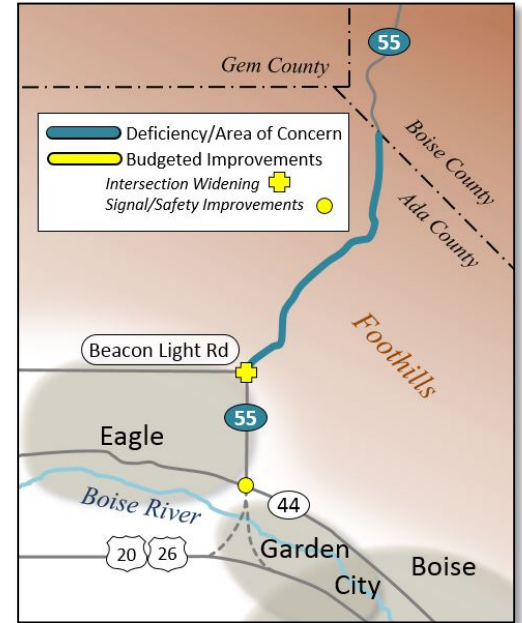
Background

State Highway 55 runs north from State Highway 44 (State Street) on the east side of the City of Eagle. It passes over the Boise foothills to Horseshoe Bend and points farther north.

In northern Ada County, State Highway 55 is a primary route for people commuting between the Treasure Valley and Boise County. It is also designated as the Payette River Scenic Byway and provides access to resorts and outdoor destinations in Boise and Valley Counties. In the past decade, the booming economy pushed housing developments into the foothills, and similar growth patterns are anticipated in the future. There are no nearby parallel routes for commuting traffic, so State Highway 55 will experience congestion in the future.

The Corridor at a Glance

- Nine miles from State Highway 44 (State Street) to Boise County line; four lanes wide from State Street to Brookside Lane (three miles) and two lanes wide from Brookside Lane to Boise County line (six miles)
- No bike lanes, but designated as a bike route from State Highway 44 to Beacon Light Road
- No sidewalks or pathways along highway
- No transit routes or park-and-ride lots
- Mostly suburban and rural
- Points of interest (south to north)
 - Industrial plant and shopping center at State Highway 44 (State Street) intersection
 - Dry Creek drainage
 - Shadow Valley Golf Course
 - Avimor planned community



Problem

Projected growth and development in the foothills of northern Ada County will cause an increase in demand on State Highway 55, causing traffic conditions to deteriorate. Traffic between Beacon Light Road and the Boise County line will be more than the road can accommodate. Traffic will move slowly at busy times and it will be difficult to turn onto and off of the highway.

Current and Future ¹	2013	2040
Population	2,740	15,698
Households	879	5,493
Employment	237	1,027

- Traffic north of Beacon Light Road will likely increase from 8,000 vehicles per day in 2013 to 27,000 per day in 2040.
 - This would be similar to current traffic levels on Broadway Avenue near the Boise State University campus.
- Average rush hour driving time between State Highway 44 and the county line is expected to increase from 10 minutes in 2013 to 40 minutes by 2040.

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



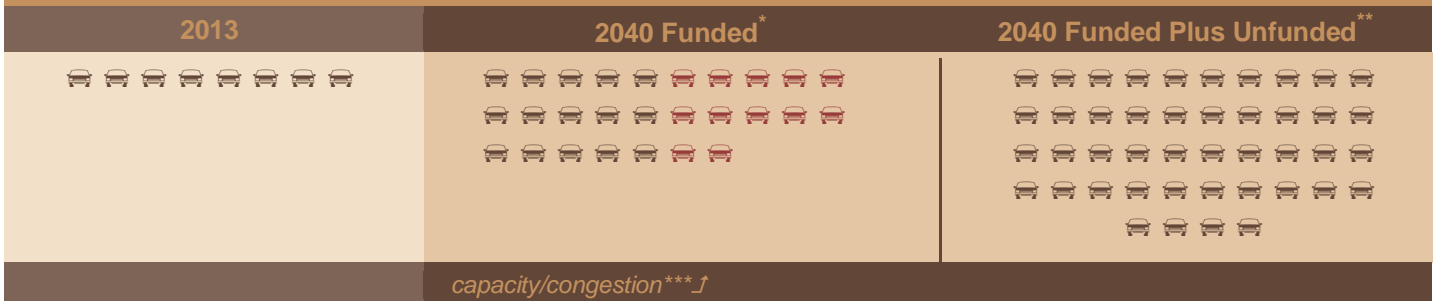
COMMUNITY PLANNING ASSOCIATION
of Southwest Idaho

State Highway 55

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Vehicles per Day in thousands



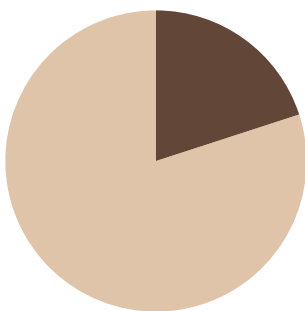
* 2040 Funded reflects the 2013 regional transportation system and all the expansion/improvement projects that are *funded* in agencies' approved budgets or capital improvement plans, listed in CIM 2040 (Chapter 6, Tables 6.2 and 6.3).

** *Unfunded* projects/improvements includes all the *unfunded* needs discussed in this summary and listed in CIM 2040 (Chapter 6, Table 6.5).

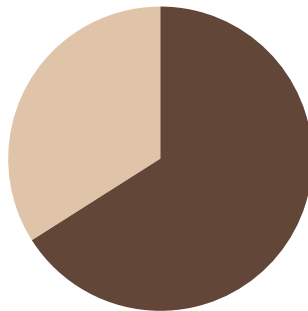
*** This is an approximate level where there is too much traffic for the road to carry and speeds will get slower as congestion gets worse. Each road's capacity depends on a number of variables, including truck traffic, number of driveways, and road conditions.

Drive Times, 2013 vs. 2040, State Highway 44 (State Street) to the County Line

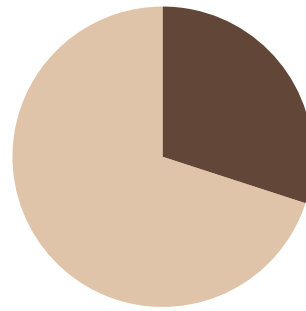
Each pie chart represents one hour. Drive times are in dark brown.



2013



2040 Funded*



2040 Funded Plus Unfunded**

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



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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 and vehicles such as bicycles, freight trucks, farm equipment, and buses may also share the road.

Environmental Issues

Changes to a roadway 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.

Important considerations in this corridor include the following:

- Wildlife habitat in the foothills north of Eagle means there is potential for automobile/wildlife crashes; this should be taken into account in infrastructure plans and investments.
- ACHD prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) while studying a potential future Boise River crossing between the State Highway 55 intersections with State Highway 44 (State Street) and US Highway 20/26 (Chinden Boulevard). The crossing is commonly referred to as the Three Cities River Crossing. Funds are not currently available to design and build the project (see priority #27).

Budgeted Projects

Roadway: Ada County Highway District's *Capital Improvement Plan*² includes a project to widen the Beacon Light Road intersection with State Highway 55 and add a traffic signal. (ACHD manages Beacon Light Road and ITD administers State Highway 55.)

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. A special project in 2014 will upgrade and coordinate the traffic signals on both sides of the Boise River between Eagle Road and Glenwood Street, and State Highway 44 (State Street) and US Highway 20/26 (Chinden Boulevard).



Unfunded Future Needs

Roadway: To alleviate congestion on State Highway 55, the road could be widened to four lanes from Beacon Light Road to the Boise County line, and additional interchanges could be added to accommodate development and increased traffic. In January 2014 the estimated costs to widen the highway to four lanes, and construct three new interchanges, was \$85.7 million.

Bus Service/Park and Ride: The regional transit services plan, *valleyconnect*, includes several projects in the corridor:

- Bus Route #49, a new commuter (rush hour) route from the City of Horseshoe Bend to downtown Boise
- new park-and-ride lots at the State Highway 44 (State Street) intersection, Avimor community, and in the City of Horseshoe Bend

² www.achdidaho.org/Departments/ROWDS/CIP.aspx



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COMMUNITIES IN MOTION 2040 | PRIORITY CORRIDOR SUMMARY

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Walking/Biking: The City of Eagle's pathway plans include a bike route and pathways that cross State Highway 55 at Farmers Union Canal and at Hill Road.

Operations, Management and Technology Projects: The regional Intelligent Transportation System plan³ includes upgrading traffic signals at the Beacon Light Road and Floating Feather Road intersections with State Highway 55.

Updated July 2014

³ *Final Report: Treasure Valley Transportation System: Operations, Management, and ITS* can be found online at www.compassidaho.org/prodserv/cms-intro.htm.