



**COMPASS**  
COMMUNITY PLANNING ASSOCIATION  
of Southwest Idaho

## North/South Kuna Corridor

### Railroad crossing in the City of Kuna on Swan Falls Road

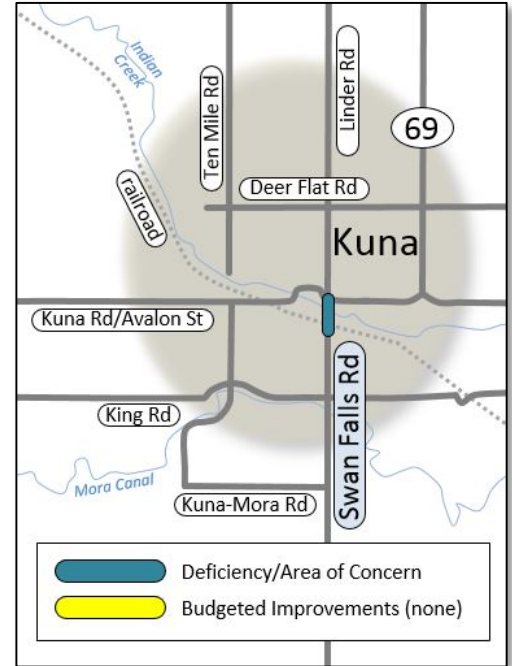
#### Priority 20

### Background

A Union Pacific Railroad line runs through Kuna just south of downtown and parallel to Indian Creek. An average of 20 trains travels this route each day, according to *Kuna Crossing: Feasibility and Implementation Plan*;<sup>1</sup> the total number can be as high as 39 trains a day. Train speeds range between 40 mph and 70 mph, and average train length is 88 cars. Trains have as many as 150 cars, up to two miles in total length, depending on the size of individual cars.

Delays of up to 3½ minutes are observed at rail crossings in Kuna when trains travel through. The average time that crossing gates are down at the railroad crossings is 2½ minutes.

The City of Kuna has requested a railroad overpass to alleviate emergency response delays, traffic delays, and north-south connectivity issues. Ada County Highway District (ACHD) completed the *Kuna Crossing* study to determine the most feasible alternative, and Swan Falls Road was selected as the preferred location.<sup>2</sup>



### The Corridor at a Glance

- Swan Falls Road/Linder Road corridor mostly rural and suburban:
  - Farms and a few large-lot subdivisions adjacent to road from I-84 south to Hubbard Road
  - Subdivisions, schools, and businesses along road from Hubbard to downtown Kuna and a short distance south of Indian Creek and the railroad
  - Farms and open brush from King Road south to Snake River/Swan Falls Dam
- Road is two lanes wide, owned and maintained by ACHD
  - Combined with Linder Road, it is the longest north-south route in the Treasure Valley
    - Swan Falls Road begins at Swan Falls Dam on the Snake River, runs 20 miles to Avalon Street in Kuna
    - Linder Road extends for seven miles from Avalon to Overland Road in Meridian
- Most homes along road in rural areas have driveway connections to Swan Falls Road/Linder Road
- Multiple creek and canal crossings
- Nearest railroad overpass is in City of Nampa at Kings Corner, eight miles to the northwest
- No transit services or park-and-ride lots on Swan Falls Road/Linder Road or elsewhere in Kuna
- No bike lanes/routes, trails, or sidewalks crossing railroad
  - Greenbelt trail runs along north side of Indian Creek
  - During the development of *Kuna Crossing*, approximately 50 people were observed crossing the railroad tracks on foot or bicycle in an 11-hour period

<sup>1</sup> [www.achdidaho.org/Projects/PublicProject.aspx?ProjectID=261](http://www.achdidaho.org/Projects/PublicProject.aspx?ProjectID=261)

<sup>2</sup> Other options included Avalon Street, Ten Mile Road, an extension of Meridian Road, and a “no-build” alternative; see [www.achdidaho.org/Projects/Media/261/1948\\_Most\\_Promising\\_Options\\_7a.pdf](http://www.achdidaho.org/Projects/Media/261/1948_Most_Promising_Options_7a.pdf).



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- Points of interest (north to south)
  - Reed Elementary and Farm Estates Park at the Deer Flat Road intersection
  - Downtown Kuna west of Main Street intersection
  - Bernie Fisher Park, Greenbelt, and Indian Creek
  - Union Pacific Railroad and industrial area
  - Mora Canal crossing
  - Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area and Initial Point butte
  - Snake River canyon and Swan Falls Dam
  - Swan Falls Road designated part of the Western Heritage Historic Byway<sup>3</sup>

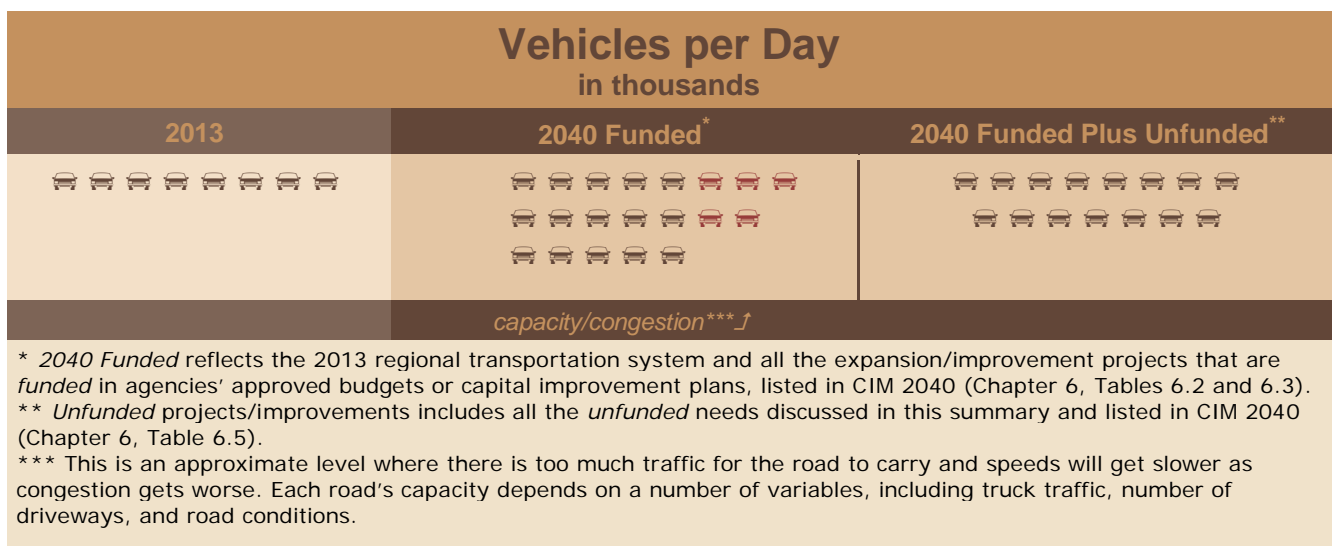
### Problem

All railroad crossings are at ground level with no overpasses, impacting travel time for emergency services and freight traffic, and creating excessive delays for all travel modes.

Current and Future <sup>4</sup>	2013	2040
Population	2,605	11,306
Households	823	4,647
Employment	465	2,685

North-south connectivity is also a concern. Swan Falls Road, which leads to the Swan Falls Dam on the Snake River in the Birds of Prey National Conservation Area, is a popular locale for tourists. Bicyclists also use the road for training. Much of the bicycle traffic passes through the City of Kuna on the way to Swan Falls Road.

Traffic levels on Swan Falls Road at the railroad crossing averaged 8,000 vehicles per day in 2013. By 2040, congestion is anticipated, with 20,000 vehicles per day, which would be compounded by delays waiting for train traffic. If the overpass is built and improvements are made to parallel and nearby routes such as McDermott and Kuna-Mora Roads, traffic on Swan Falls Road in 2040 is expected to be more manageable at 15,000 per day, although this is nearly double the amount of traffic today.



<sup>3</sup> www.visitidaho.org/scenic-byways/western-heritage-historic-byway

<sup>4</sup> Population, housing, and employment in the corridor are based on neighborhoods and other developments near the road.



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

#### **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 as well as provide for “environmental justice,” ensuring all people can be involved and are treated fairly.<sup>5</sup>

There are a number of sensitive areas to consider in this corridor:

- Indian Creek and Mora Canal
- prime, irrigated farmland throughout the corridor
- school adjacent to roadway

There are no environmental justice concerns, as the proposed overpass location does not include concentrations of low-income or minority populations.

### Budgeted Projects

**Roadway:** ACHD’s *Capital Improvements Plan*<sup>6</sup> includes projects to improve intersections on Linder Road from Lake Hazel Road northward (see also priority #6). The intersection improvements (at Lake Hazel, Amity, Victory, and Overland Roads) have a total estimated cost of \$12.8 million.

### Unfunded Future Needs

**Roadway:** Railroad crossing improvements would end travel delays currently experienced when trains go through this area. Improvements would allow for quicker emergency response to residents on the south side of the crossing as well as for more efficient travel for tourists and bicyclists who use the road.

Per *Kuna Crossing*, the estimated cost for a bridge/overpass on Swan Falls Road spanning the railroad and Indian Creek is about \$17 million, and would require other changes to nearby streets.<sup>7</sup> The Kuna Downtown Corridor Plan also proposes various improvements in the vicinity, such as a roundabout at the Swan Falls Road/Avalon Street/Linder Road intersection.

**Bus Service/Park and Ride:** The regional transit services plan, *valleyconnect*, calls for a flex bus route and a park-and-ride lot to serve the Kuna area.

**Operations, Management and Technology Projects:** The regional Intelligent Transportation System plan<sup>8</sup> does not call for major improvements in the corridor.

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<sup>5</sup> See federal environmental justice definitions at [www.epa.gov/region07/ej/definitions.htm](http://www.epa.gov/region07/ej/definitions.htm).

<sup>6</sup> [www.achdidaho.org/Departments/ROWDS/CIP.aspx](http://www.achdidaho.org/Departments/ROWDS/CIP.aspx)

<sup>7</sup> [www.achdidaho.org/Projects/Media/261/1948\\_Most\\_Promising\\_Options\\_7a.pdf](http://www.achdidaho.org/Projects/Media/261/1948_Most_Promising_Options_7a.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> *Final Report: Treasure Valley Transportation System: Operations, Management, and ITS*, is online at [www.compassidaho.org/prodserv/cms-intro.htm](http://www.compassidaho.org/prodserv/cms-intro.htm).