

Leadership in Government, Ada County

Ada County Highway District / HDR Kootenai Street Traffic Calming Concept Study

Kootenai Street is one of Boise's iconic streets, with unique architecture, a robust tree canopy, three schools nearby, and Bowden Park. Unfortunately, it has seen increased traffic volumes and speeds, significantly impacting the street. A severe injury crash involving a young child on a bike brought safety concerns to the forefront.

Ada County Highway District (ACHD) teamed with HDR to find community-related solutions for Kootenai Street. An innovative study and public outreach effort identified several collaborative improvements to restore Kootenai Street to a true neighborhood street. They will improve connectivity for all users, especially pedestrians and bicyclists, and enhance safety by calming traffic and separating these users from vehicles.

One compromise ACHD made with residents was to remove on-street parking from the street's north side to add sidewalks, bike lanes, gateway treatments, and traffic calming measures, while not encroaching on trees, landscaping, and other property features. This will make walking and biking more attractive for navigating this neighborhood while enhancing the designated safe route to school with connections to existing sidewalks and pedestrian ramps. The streetscape improvements will enhance mobility while slowing vehicle speeds with chicanes and bulb-outs, while removing unused parking spaces to provide enhanced pedestrian and bike improvements and narrow the road.

ACHD and HDR developed robust and unique public involvement activities to gather feedback from as many residents and users of the corridor as possible, including door-to-door contact, personal letters, online invitations and information, showing specific property impacts on a smart display, providing guided tours through open houses, and hosting property owner-specific meetings. The team received 379 comments, and 320 people attended the open houses.

With these opportunities, along with the dialogue and compromise that followed, the study recommendations received 78% stakeholder approval. The enhanced streetscape will create a strong sense of place and safety, along with a visual message that communicates that people are entering a safe, comfortable neighborhood for leisurely walks, bike rides, and neighborhood gatherings.

In January 2019, the ACHD Commission unanimously adopted the Kootenai Street Traffic Calming Concept Study.