

## Reader's Opinion

### Bob Van Arnem: Developers have feeding frenzy at our expense

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Mayor Dave Bieter could not have said it better: "It's uncontrolled development that's chaos."

Avimor should have been rejected, as should the dozen planned communities and countless unplanned subdivisions across the valley in Ada, Canyon and Gem counties. Why? Because there is no regional transportation system on the drawing board, finalized, funded and ready for ground-breaking that will mitigate traffic congestion in the valley. It is time for the seemingly endless, costly studies to conclude and action to be taken. So long as developments are approved without a requirement that first the road system is able to handle efficiently the additional traffic, there will continue to be a lack of urgency in solving the problem. And developers must be required to fund the necessary improvements.

Having attended many public meetings pertaining to transportation, including some sponsored by COMPASS, of which the membership comprises a virtual who's who in community leadership in the valley, I do not believe that the solution lies with groups that have a vested interest in studying the problem and take years to do so. Individual accountability is lost in the anonymity of committees.

The traffic generated by Avimor, which according to SunCor's permit application to the Army Corps of Engineers projects a construction start this spring and a completion of work three years hence (see U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Application # NWW No. 052100162), will feed onto Idaho 55, State Street, Eagle Road and, likely, Chinden Boulevard. Regarding the Three Cities River Crossing, which might divert traffic from Eagle Road, ACHD "... would like to complete construction by 2015, but that depends on funding." (See ACHD handout dated November 2005, titled, "Three Cities River Crossing, Frequently Asked Questions.") Citing this document further, prior to construction, the following must occur: Environmental impact statement completed; approval by FHWA; acquisition of right of way; completion of design; and required permits obtained. And then there is the unknown of "... how traffic needs develop in the future." Does anyone believe that alleviating traffic congestion can wait 10 years? Consider the last 10.

I support all aspects of the Idaho Transportation Department's Eagle Road Improvement Project and would oppose and fight any effort to turn Eagle Road (and U.S. 20/26) into a "freeway."

Grade separations and more lanes will not fix the problem. ITD is not to blame for the Eagle Road situation, but, the city councils and the city and county planning and zoning commissions that continue to approve development without concomitant expansion of the road system are. Traffic congestion on Eagle Road and U.S. 20/26 could be mitigated by an outerbelt for movement of east-west traffic to/from Canyon County; connection of Idaho 16 to Interstate- 84, or a new north-south road to accomplish this, for movement of traffic to/from Gem County; and high-speed commuter transit to reduce the number of vehicles that daily travel the same route to and from work.

"Insufficient funds" is not an acceptable excuse for failure to act. In business, when customer counts increase, profitability usually follows, provided the increased income is not squandered. One would think the same principle applies to governance in a high growth area like the Treasure Valley. Where there is a will, there is a way. Perhaps more prudent

use and wiser stewardship of the people's money is needed.

In conclusion, the Treasure Valley is hosting a feeding frenzy. Developers are gorging themselves.

And, in three years, or five, when Avimor is completed (as well as other developments) it won't be SunCor's shareholders fighting the additional traffic clogging already congested roads.

Bob Van Arnhem lives in Eagle.