Sales tax zone could build expressway

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TREASURE VALLEY — Canyon County drivers would benefit from the convenience of the extension of State Highway 16 to an interchange with Interstate 84.

And according to an economic study commissioned by the state, construction of the road would have a $4.2 billion positive economic impact on the area over 25 years and create 33,000 jobs in 30 years.

The planned north-south expressway would serve as an alternative to more congested roads and give motorists another option for travel north from Nampa, south from Middleton and for other routes.

Survey: Hwy 16 corridor would create jobs

TREASURE VALLEY — The State Highway 16 project extends the highway south of U.S. Highway 20/26, or Chinden Boulevard, to Interstate 84.

It could become a reality within two years if the Legislature passes a Transportation Economic Development Zone, or TEDZ, bill.

“We need another north-south corridor with our present population,” Sen. Curt McKenzie, R-Nampa, said. “But we will continue to grow, and it will just get worse unless we do something.”

Taxing districts in the proposed TEDZ, which include parts of Nampa and Middleton, would lose sales tax revenue with the proposal. That could bring opposition to the legislation, Sen. Chuck Winder, R-Boise, said. Winder and House Majority Leader Rep. Mike Moyle, R-Star, sponsored a TEDZ bill late in the 2012 Legislative session.

Elwood Kleaver is a former Boise Valley Economic Partnership chairman. He supports TEDZ.

“This particular legislation would provide a great vehicle not only for (the Highway 16 expansion) but for other highway construction projects in other parts of the state,” Kleaver said last year.

McKenzie likes the proposed TEDZ because, unlike GARVEE (Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle) funding for highway projects the state has used in the past, the money would not depend on future federal government allocations.

“I think when people look at the fundamental purpose of government I think one of those is infrastructure that allows individuals and business to succeed,” McKenzie said. “And building this infrastructure in the Treasure Valley is an important step.”

Why State Highway 16?

• Highway 16 expansion could take congestion off Eagle Road, Chinden Boulevard, and State Street, as well as easing congestion on Interstate 84, Garrity Boulevard, Meridian Road and Ten Mile Road.
There are no Interstate 84 interchanges or major north-south roadways that take traffic north of the Interstate between Garrity Boulevard and Ten Mile Road, a distance of about four miles.

As western Ada County and eastern Canyon County grow, the ability to move traffic north-south is a primary concern, according to the Idaho Department of Transportation.

The new highway corridor will connect seven cities to Interstate 84: Nampa, Caldwell, Meridian, Eagle, Star, Middleton and Emmett.

The highway will connect three counties and two highways to Interstate 84: Ada, Canyon and Gem counties; State Highway 44, or State Street, and U.S. Highway 20/26, or Chinden Boulevard.

**What will the road look like?**

Plans are not final, but the vision is to make Highway 16 what one official called the opposite of Eagle Road, which is known for its congestion and multiple access points. The proposed four-lane road has been dubbed the Central Valley Expressway, and plans are to greatly limit access with interchanges only at major roadways. “One thing about this road is they’re building it where there’s nothing, and they can restrict the curb cuts (access points),” Lt. Gov. Brad Little said.

**What is TEDZ?**

The TEDZ is intended to create surplus new sales tax from retail and construction activities intended to be more than the amount needed to pay bond debt for building of the expressway. The TEDZ requires a simple majority voter approval by communities within the Transportation Economic Development Zone.

“I think we will get support of the communities that would be affected,” McKenzie said.

**How were economic impact numbers calculated?**

Local economist John Church projected economic impact numbers based on construction of the highway extension. The study concluded that sales tax generated by new growth along the State Highway corridor would pay for the corridor improvements.

“I think he’s a very competent economist, so I have no reason to believe” his numbers are inaccurate, Winder said.

**How many construction jobs would be created with the project?**

An estimated 16,800.

**How much population increase is projected in support of the project?**

Population in Ada and Canyon counties grew 74 percent and 57 percent, respectively, between 1980 and 2000. The population in the Treasure Valley is forecast to reach 1,046,000 by 2035 from a
current population of approximately 600,000.

**What is the Central Valley Expressway Coalition?**

The Central Valley Expressway Coalition is a group of stakeholders that advocates for the construction of the Highway 16 extension, which has been dubbed the Central Valley Expressway. The Coalition says it is critical to build the expressway soon because, among other reasons, cost of the project will increase in the future.