It's good to see that the city of Nampa and Idaho Transportation Department plan to fund a project to ease the traffic bottleneck common at the Karcher interchange on Interstate 84.

However, it comes with an urgent word of advice: Get it right the first time.

The Karcher interchange was a solid investment, but let's face it, it was poorly designed. The location was ideal, but the execution wasn’t.

Story continues below video

From our partners: Cities With the Worst Traffic

There are two exits for the interchange coming in from the east. You take the first one and discover you can’t make a left turn. The second one appears as though it’s beyond the interchange, but it swings back around in a wide loop and puts you on top of Karcher Road.

The intersection of exit ramp 33B and Midland Boulevard has the third-highest rate of crashes among unsignaled intersections in southwest Idaho, according to the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho. If you’ve driven it, you can understand why.

So why does it seem that so many of our roadways have to be redone? Recall the Franklin Road overpass in Caldwell and the major revamp that was done there back in the early 2000s. The initial redesign didn’t account
for the amount of traffic exiting on to the interstate coming up from North 21st Avenue, and the backlog was horrible. So that one had to be redone.

Could it be that engineers are relying too much on computer models that don't accurately anticipate what real human beings are going to do when they get behind the wheel, which is seldom predictable?

Take, for instance, the way many drivers respond when making a right turn from Caldwell Boulevard onto the Karcher interchange. Many motorists stop and yield to oncoming traffic, even though they don’t have to. Did planners anticipate that when they designed it?

We’re also concerned about a proposed plan to install a U-turn at the signal in front of Karcher Mall to allow drivers traveling southeast to reverse direction and access businesses northeast of Caldwell Boulevard. With the traffic volume — which is likely to only increase through the years — it has all the markings of another one of those traffic changes that will be in dire need of a change again.

And that’s what all of this should be about — what’s traffic going to be like in 10, 15, 20 years? Are we prepared for that, or are we going to keep changing things every few years?

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