

I-84 to be completely repaved between Nampa and Caldwell

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NAMPA — Interstate 84 will be completely repaved this summer from Franklin Boulevard in Nampa to Franklin Road in Caldwell — and yes, officials are still seeking funds to widen the interstate.

The Idaho Transportation Department announced the repaving plans Monday. ITD previously planned to only repave a smaller segment of I-84 west of Nampa to Caldwell, but now the entire stretch of both eastbound and westbound I-84 between the two cities will be repaved.

“We recognize the importance of this corridor and have focused our efforts on completing this resurfacing work as swiftly as possible,” ITD District 3 engineer Amy Revis said in a statement.

The resurfacing was originally planned to begin in 2018 and 2019, but it was moved up to this summer because the road quickly deteriorated under the recent harsh winter conditions. For two weeks in January, ITD closed parts of the interstate as workers applied temporary patches to potholes.

ITD officials said support from the cities of Nampa and Caldwell and the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho helped move the project forward sooner.

The repave will cost \$14 million. The money comes from ITD’s statewide pavement restoration program, funded by state and federal sources such as registration fees and the gas tax, ITD spokeswoman Jennifer Gonzalez said.

The first day of repaving will be announced at a later date, Gonzalez said.

Work will take place over the course of four weekends. That will provide a safer work zone for crews and reduce the impact to travelers along the interstate, according to an ITD press release. It also reduces the cost and time to complete the project. That cost savings allowed the project to be extended to cover more miles of interstate.

What about widening interstate?

The repave project does not include widening I-84, which is estimated to cost \$330 million just to increase it from two to three lanes between Franklin Road and Franklin Boulevard.

Nampa Mayor Bob Henry called the repaving project a first step.

In January, Henry and Canyon County Commissioner Steve Rule submitted an editorial to the Idaho Press-Tribune describing I-84 in Canyon County as “deplorable,” calling for the Legislature and state to provide the means to widen the interstate.

“I would prefer widening, but I understand it’s 300-something million dollars, and they don’t have it,” Henry said in an interview with the Idaho Press-Tribune. “So, in the meantime, the repaving is a wonderful improvement.”

Henry said driving on the section of I-84 in question is “teeth-rattling.”

ITD and COMPASS continue to pursue federal grants that would help cover the cost of a widening project. In December, they submitted an application to the federal FASTLANE program, which stands for Fostering Advancements in Shipping and Transportation for the Long-term Achievement of National Efficiencies.

The recent FASTLANE application asks for \$54 million to help fund a \$90 million project to widen both east and westbound I-84 to three lanes between the Karcher underpass and Franklin Boulevard in Nampa.

The agencies applied several times for FASTLANE and other federal grants, but have been turned down so far. At this point, waiting for word on the recent FASTLANE application is a waiting game, said Amy Luft, spokeswoman for COMPASS.

In the meantime, Canyon County state legislators made funding a fix for I-84 a high priority this session, said Rep. Robert Anderst, R-Nampa.

“We’ve said from the outset this year that fixing the pinch point on I-84 was a priority for almost all of us,” Anderst said. “And we’ve continually been working to fix that in some fashion.”

The group of 2C legislators communicate daily about their plans. Anderst said ITD’s announcement about the repave was not connected to those discussions.

Paying to widen I-84 in Canyon County is not a new topic for the Legislature, though, something Anderst recognized.

The difference this year, he said, is “we realized that the interstate is in such poor repairs that it can be shut down at any time, and that is unacceptable.”

— *Editor Torrie Cope contributed to this report.*