

# Mapping the road ahead: City leaders hold workshop to develop Transportation Master Plan

By ERIN BAMER ebamer@idahopress.com

Jun 9, 2017



NAMPA — Meridian resident Joy Blomberg used to live in south Nampa, but she left partially because of how difficult it was for her to get around the city.

To help improve some of the key issues with Nampa's transportation system, city leaders scheduled three community workshops — the first of which was held Thursday — to devise a Transportation Master Plan. The goal of the plan is to create a high-quality transportation network in Nampa by 2040.

Heavy traffic is a big issue of frustration for many Nampans, as well as people who drive through the city. Dave Fyock, another participant in the workshop, said it is actually easier for him to get to Boise by going through Caldwell than driving through Nampa. Several streets that were identified as having the worst traffic were Midland and Garrity boulevards, and 11th and 12th avenues.

"Who designed this?" Fyock said. "Because it does not have a logical flow pattern to it. It was designed like it was a 30,000 population city, instead of a future 100,000 population city."

Andrea Olson, Utah operations manager with the consulting firm Parametrix, said traffic is an increasingly big issue for the city because the population is growing so fast. The population has increased 18 percent since the 2010 census. Of the employed population in the city, 90 percent use a car to get to work, and 78 percent of those people drive alone. That means traffic is dominated by single-occupant vehicles, Olson said.

Workshop participants identified the stoplight system as a reason for lengthy back-ups in traffic. Blomberg said the stoplights in Nampa stay red or green for long periods of time — much longer than the traffic systems of neighboring states. She said when she talks with visitors from Oregon or Washington, they're shocked at how long they have to wait at red lights.

But City Engineer Tom Points said many of the stoplights are on a timed system to help maintain a steady flow of traffic. Some even operate on a connected system that adjust to the level of traffic throughout the day.

Some participants highlighted positive things the city has done that have helped improve traffic in Nampa. The roundabouts installed in the area have sped up their trips and are safer than four-way stops, Blomberg said.

Safety was another key issue addressed in the workshop.

“You’re never going to get anybody who says that safety is low on the list of priorities,” Olson said.

Points said in the last five years, there were 6,549 car crashes in Nampa, resulting in almost 180 serious injuries and five fatalities. Because of this, investing in infrastructure is even more important, he said. This includes investing in more stop signs, some with flashing lights to increase their visibility, or improving safe traffic systems for pedestrians or bike travelers.

One reason why many participants said they came to the workshop was to improve freight travel. Points said freight transportation has a huge impact on the economy.

“You could go onto Amazon and buy a package that’s anything you could get at a K-Mart or a Wal-Mart and have it at your doorstep the next day or day after,” Points said.

Industry revolves around freight travel, which generates taxes and then feeds back into itself by helping fund more transportation improvements. This is a big advantage for a railroad town like Nampa, he said, because it attracts further industry and helps fuel the city’s growth.

Olson said when considering freight travel in their transportation plans, they need to be accommodating to the size of the vehicles. This includes making sure the roads and turn lanes have a large enough radius to fit longer vehicles. Among large commercial truck drivers, Points said, a key priority for them is to find a way to get onto the interstate as quickly and as safely as possible, which is something the city can prioritize as well.

Senior Transportation Planner Clair Bowman said the second workshop on the Transportation Master Plan is tentatively planned for mid-November or early December, and it will focus on how to fund the needed improvements.