



Mayor Robert E. Simison
City Council Members:
Brad Hoaglund John Overton
Joe Borton Jessica Perreault
Luke Cavener Liz Strader

February 8, 2023

Alexis Pickering
Commission President
Ada County Highway District
3775 Adams Street
Garden City, ID 83714

RE: Locust Grove and Victory Intersection Design

Meridian appreciates the continued improvements of transportation facilities in and around the City. One such project is the Locust Grove and Amity intersection. This intersection is important to accommodate ever growing east-west and north-south trips, for increasing bike and pedestrian connectivity in the area, and to better support the Mary McPherson elementary school to the west. Locust Grove is a critically important corridor for not just the residents of Meridian, but also those arriving in Meridian from Kuna to the South.

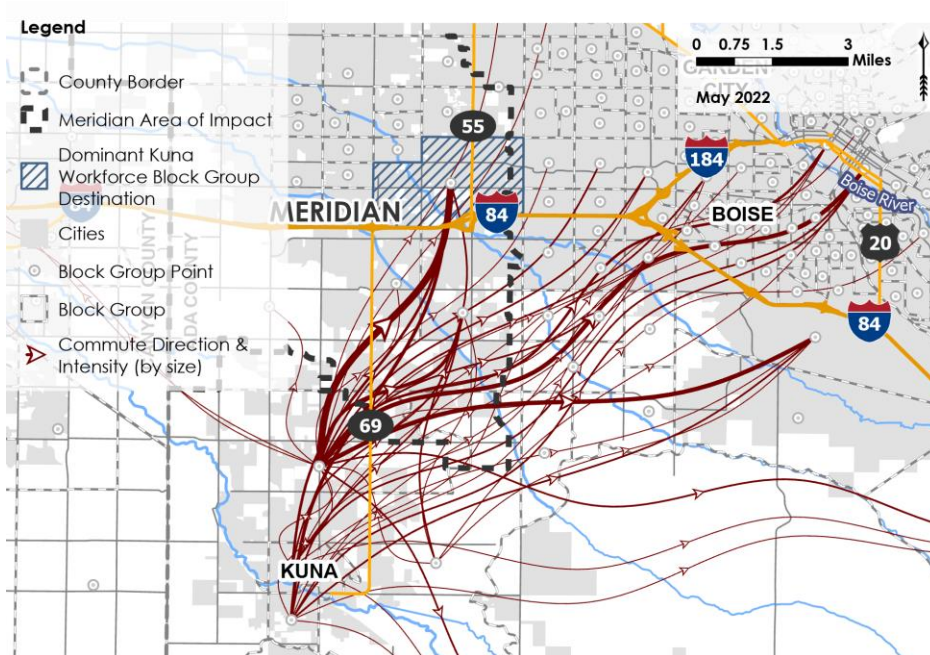
As Kuna continues to see heavy development activity east of Ten Mile Road, the Meridian Road corridor is no longer seeing strong demand only at peak hours but throughout the day and including weekends. Traffic bound for or originating in Kuna is not just commuters, but also freight trips that compound congestion and reduce operational efficiency. Without approved plans or funding to otherwise improve virtually any aspect of the Meridian Road corridor, Locust Grove is increasingly important for those trips crossing the interstate and not bound for an interchange.

As the following map illustrates, one of the Census Blocks in Meridian (160010103211) which includes Scentsy, Blue Cross, and other large employers, is the single most dominant Census Block to Census Block destination for Kuna workforce trips. These worker trips will naturally seek to avoid the congested interchanges at Meridian and Eagle when possible. This behavior should be encouraged to reduce needless impacts of pass-through traffic near the I-84 ramps. This is all the truer when there are also no lane expansions or other bridge rehabilitation improvements planned for the Eagle Road interchange.

Commented [CH1]: I like this paragraph, but it does make the letter pretty long. Maybe remove?

Commented [BM2R1]: Robert, this paragraph is context for the map and to support the idea that if we want to actually plan for what we want, and not just let the magical travel demand model tell us what we get, then we have to try and influence that. ITD isn't going to do anything, has no plans too, so what can we do with ACHD.

It is long though. Good paragraph to delete if you want to reduce.



Note: Map does not show routes, only general origin-destination of 30 or more workers from all Kuna Census Block Groups. Data is from the 2019 Census LEHD, LODS data set.

The City of Meridian has advocated for years to preserve the Locust Road corridor south of Victory for 5-lanes. While not all of the necessary right-of-way has been preserved, the opportunity still exists to plan for a 5-lane facility. Unlike other corridors such as Ten Mile north of Cherry Lane, which was not adequately preserved for and wiped out many neighborhood landscape buffers, there is still a combination of undeveloped properties, city owned property, and additional open space that may accommodate future widening without entirely wiping out neighborhood identities.

This project at Locust Grove and Amity was originally to consider an additional southbound approach on the north-leg. This could have been a right-turn only lane (heading west on Amity), or some type of future bypass lane in the same direction. This was due to the traffic demand model showing failure in this future leg. However, these options were removed from the project design primarily due to right-of-way costs and impacts to existing stakeholders. Regardless of the model, additional capacity north is important to alleviate interchange impacts given other limited State programmed improvements to Meridian Road and the Eagle Road interchange.

The City requests ACHD design the Locust Grove and Amity intersection planning for Locust Grove to be 5-lanes north in the future. If not constructed now as part of the project, the plans should identify and include the future expansion opportunity.

When design originally started, a roundabout at Amity and Eagle was to be planned for future expansion, but because approach and exit angles were not adequately considered in relation to traffic speeds, the entire intersection had to be destroyed and shifted. The City had provided comments to this effect prior to the second redesign. Due to the original design shortcoming, the new project negatively impacted multiple properties that received entitlements after the original design and which should have supported an ultimate configuration. The City does not want to see existing stakeholders impacted any more than necessary for this additional expansion, but neither does the City want to see short-term decisions negatively impact many more future stakeholders for the life of the improvements. This additional southbound approach will also help to accommodate a 5-lane roadway design to the north.

Commented [CH3]: Again, I like the paragraph but it may add too much length to the letter.

Commented [BM4R3]: Robert, same thing here. Context to support argument, but if length is critical then remove.

Another concern with the current design status of the intersection project, which has been a topic of joint concern for both ACHD and the City recently, the City would like to see improved connectivity from the intersection to Mary McPherson elementary school. Mary Mac is just outside the project boundary. Additional subdivisions are filling in north and east, and this intersection project is well suited to make these improvements now rather than creating additional construction impacts later. While the City appreciates the extruded curb design effort to the school, this seems like an inappropriate half-way approach. During the design phase previously the City and ACHD seemed to agree that a sidewalk was warranted; the City supports this concept to improve future safe route opportunities and general pedestrian safety.

We recognize and appreciate that this project is now at 50% design, but we are sharing our concerns as quickly as possible. There were some delays in communication after a new ACHD project manager was assigned and we have just recently learned of the change in concept. **The City requests that ACHD reconsider the design of this intersection to accommodate additional future lanes on Locust Grove Road to the north, and to improve safe pedestrian connectivity to Mary McPherson Elementary School.** Further, the City formally requests that the master street map be modified to preserve Locust Grove for 5-lanes north of Amity Road to Victory Road. Please feel free to contact Brian McClure at 208-884-5533, if you have any questions regarding this letter.

Sincerely,

Mayor Robert E. Simison

cc: David Rader, Senior Project Manager, Capital Projects
Caleb Hood, Planning Division Manager
Brian McClure, Comprehensive Associate Planner
Miranda Carson, Comprehensive Associate Coordination Planner