

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 9, 2020 Project #: 23858

To: Project Management Team

From: Russ Doubleday, Mark Heisinger, EIT, and Nick Foster, AICP, RSP

Project: City of Ontario, Active Transportation Update and East Idaho Avenue Refinement Area Plan

Subject: Task 3 Outreach Summary

The project team and City of Ontario recently completed outreach efforts related to existing conditions for the project study areas. These efforts included:

- An online meeting with stakeholders along the East Idaho Avenue corridor on May 27, 2020.
- Two online workshops, one for the Active Transportation Plan and one for the East Idaho Avenue Refinement Area, were held from May 28, 2020 to June 19, 2020.
- Opportunities to provide comments via the project website.

Notes summarizing the stakeholder meeting were previously provided to the Project Management Team (PMT) and all attendees. This memorandum summarizes the feedback received from the online workshops.

ONLINE WORKSHOPS

The following sections describe the online workshops and the key findings resulting from them.

Overview

The project team hosted two virtual open houses to solicit feedback on the project as part of the Task 3 outreach effort. One open house focused on the Active Transportation Plan and the other focused on the East Idaho Avenue Refinement Area. The open houses were launched on Thursday, May 28th and were closed on Friday, June 19th. The City advertised the open houses through several means, including social media posts, e-mails blasts, press releases, and ads in the Argus Observer newspaper (paper and electronic versions).

The virtual open house for the Ontario Active Transportation Plan had the following components:

- Information about the project, including the project purpose and schedule

- Project goals and objectives
- Maps showing the existing walking, biking, and transit networks in Ontario, as well as a level of traffic stress analysis for walking and biking segments and intersections
- Links to additional project resources and feedback opportunities, including:
 - The project website
 - A map of the study area for open house participants to provide comments on walking and biking in Ontario
 - A public transportation survey

The virtual open house for the East Idaho Avenue Refinement Area Plan had the following components:

- Information about the project, including the project purpose and schedule
- Project goals and objectives
- Maps showing the project study area, traffic operations at intersections in the corridor, and the corridor's crash history
- Links to additional project resources and feedback opportunities, including:
 - The project website
 - A map of the study area for open house participants to provide comments on East Idaho Avenue

Online Workshop Findings

Findings from the feedback received at the online workshops are summarized in the following sections.

Ontario Active Transportation Plan

The Ontario Active Transportation Plan virtual open house received 16 online map comments and 7 public transportation survey responses. 8 comments regarding active transportation in Ontario were also received via the project website. *The comments and responses are shown in Attachment "A".*

Multiple themes emerged in the online map comments and from the projects received via the project website, including:

- Three commenters appreciated the new path by Treasure Valley Community College and hoped to see it extended or for the current plans to be followed, regarding walking trails and access to the TVCC campus
- Several commenters noted the lack of sidewalks and bike lanes on SE 5th Avenue, which has a 35 miles-per-hour (MPH) speed limit and the overpass over I-84, which is one of the only connections across I-84.
- Several commenters discussed SW 4th Avenue. The topics of these comments included a desire for additional transit stops with amenities and adding rectangular rapid flashing beacons to help pedestrians cross the road.

- Several commentators noted that there are gaps in the sidewalks and that sidewalk quality is generally inconsistent.
- Two commentators noted that downtown has the best facilities for biking and walking, while the rest of the town is lacking.
- A visually impaired member of the community noted the following challenges that he faces walking through Ontario, especially on the east side of town: gaps in the sidewalk network (requiring them to walk on the side of the road a few feet from heavy traffic), obstacles or obstructions in sidewalks (such as poles, mailboxes, potholes, and branches), and patches of goatheads (an obstacle for guide dogs).

The public transportation survey asked respondents whether they rode the bus in Ontario, where they took the bus to and from, and what could be done to make the bus more attractive to use.

Of the seven respondents, one said they rode the bus while the other six did not (the one rider is also a bus driver on the SRT-Malheur Express: City of Ontario route). The lone bus rider to respond said that the current route takes too long to cross town to be feasible for many people to use. For those who did not ride the bus, common themes for making the bus more attractive to use included more frequent service, increased accessibility and more stops, different routes, and longer hours.

East Idaho Avenue Refinement Area Plan

The virtual open house for the East Idaho Avenue Refinement Area Plan received 29 online map comments, 4 comments on project goals and objectives, and 4 comments received via email. *The comments are shown in Attachment "B".*

Comments on the project goals and objectives are as follows:

- Would like to see more family-friendly access. Outside of the downtown area, much of the city looks and feels dangerous and uninviting.
- Request for improved streetscape to make the area more appealing to residents and visitors.

Comments on the East Idaho Avenue Refinement Area contained a variety of requests and observations related to traffic congestion and active transportation facilities. Common themes regarding the East Idaho Avenue Refinement Area (and the number of comments received) are as follows:

- Move or re-configure the transit stop that is currently next to Walmart so that buses don't have to maneuver through parking lots (x3)
 - *It should be noted that another comment (listed below) requested to keep the Walmart transit stop in its current location*
- There is currently heavy traffic congestion from driveway-related traffic:
 - There is heavy traffic congestion on East Lane just south of East Idaho Avenue from cars going in and out of driveways (x3)

- There is heavy traffic congestion on Goodfellow Street north of East Idaho Avenue from cars going in and out of driveways (particularly the driveway adjacent to Denny's) (x3)

Other comments included:

- Requests for bicycle and pedestrian facilities
 - Sidewalk and lighting on the north side of the Snake River Bridge
 - Crosswalk enhancements on East Lane just south of East Idaho Avenue
 - Connection from East Idaho Avenue to SE 10th Street (near the bus station) for people who walk and bike (x2)
 - More benches and seating at regular intervals for people with limited mobility
 - Improvements for people walking on SE 5th Avenue railway crossing – neighborhood is current cut off from services east of the railway (x2)
 - Buffers between vehicles and foot traffic on East Idaho Avenue
- Requests for transit-related improvements
 - Request to keep transit stop at Walmart in current location – provides direct business access to people with limited mobility
 - More transit stops
- Transportation improvements
 - There is congestion at SE 5th St and SE 10th St intersection (x2)
 - Access control needed on East Idaho Avenue west of intersection (x2)
 - SE 1st Ave and SE 13th St intersection and SE 1st Ave intersections are confusing and cause traffic (x2)
 - More signs for bus stops
 - Extended service hours
 - More bus stops/increased bus service through town
- Other requests
 - Signage to businesses on East Idaho Avenue

Attachment A
Active Transportation Plan Open
House Comments and Feedback

Ontario Active Transportation Plan Update

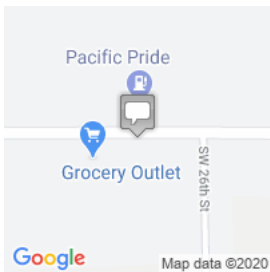
Comments submitted as of 7:53AM on June 22, 2020



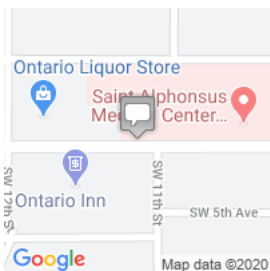
The new walking path around TVCC is wonderful. Thank you!



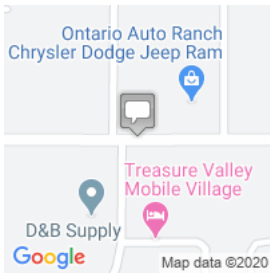
Current bus stop is a pole in the middle of the parking lot next to Jacksons. Would like to see a shelter/bench installed off of 4th ave.



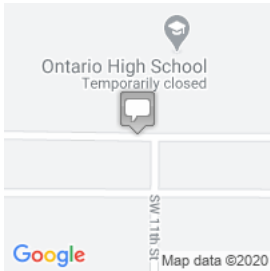
Current bus stop is a sign post. Would like to see a shelter/bench installed.



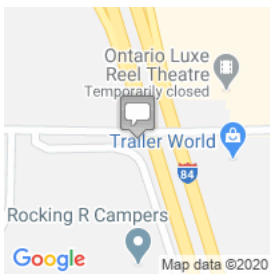
Transit bus stop is actually located more in this area. Would like to see adjustment of stop location and shelter/bench installed. This stop is no very accessible to disabled individuals.



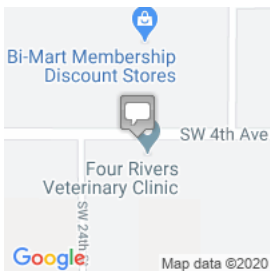
Would like to see additional stops for public transit installed along 4th ave on both sides.



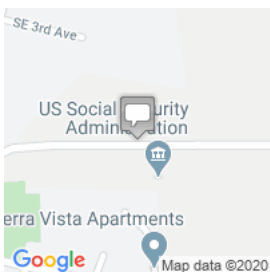
Future redesign of fixed route services would like include a stop at the Ontario High School.



I drive over this overpass daily and usually see someone or family walking over the overpass going from shopping I assume to home. This is very narrow and should be improved for walking / biking to make it a safer route



Comment applies to all of 4th avenue. Need to add more pedestrian cross walk / lights to make this safer (flags aren't cutting it).



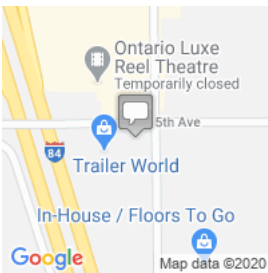
Sidewalks along 5th ave in this area would be helpful to pedestrians. It can get scary walking down this road. A lot of the traffic going down this road does not go the speed limit.



The tater tot trail walking path and bike path can become a huge asset and attraction and added amenity for the city. This should continue to be a priority.



The continuation of the Treasure Valley connector trail can really make a difference for walkers and bike riders to get around the community and have protected areas to walk and ride.



SE 5th ave. has a lot of foot traffic and vehicle traffic. This needs to have more and better sidewalks for the safety of the community.



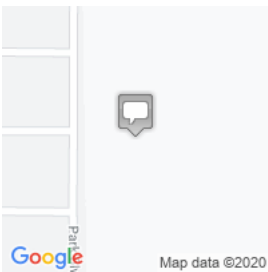
We need to create appealing off and on ramps from I-84 that make commuters/ travelers want to get off the freeway and stop in our town. Give them a reason to stop, make it look nice and inviting to have them use the bike and walking paths.



I would like to have traffic control systems to make it safer for first responders and all types of commuters.



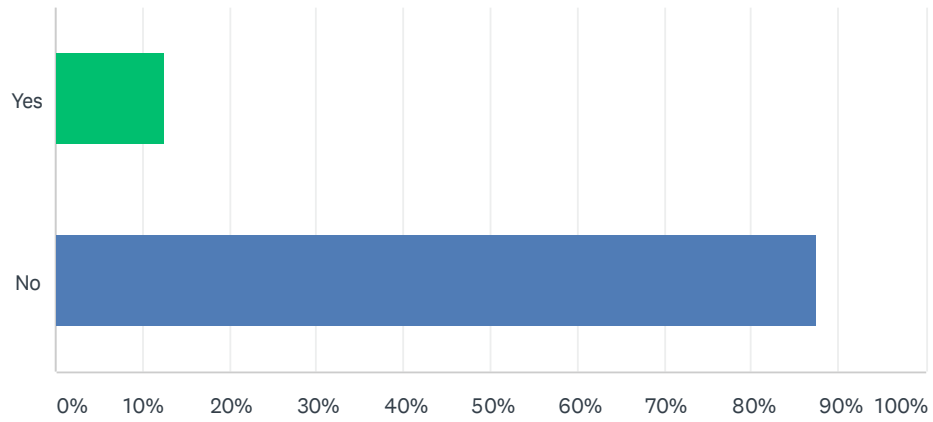
We need bike lanes throughout Ontario



This new path is amazing. Mmt daughter and I ride thre path very often...we see so many people enjoying it walking, running, bikes... even little kids can ride on it away from traffic. More of this sonnet than later.....we need to promote healthy life styles

Q1 Do you ride the bus in Ontario?

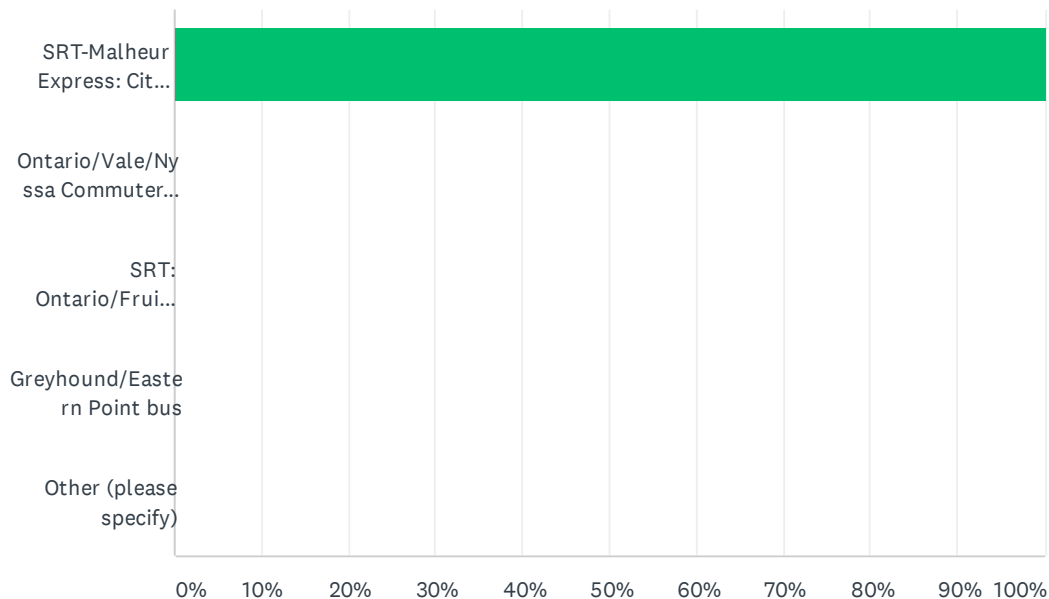
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	12.50%	1
No	87.50%	7
TOTAL		8

Q2 What buses do you ride? Select all that apply.

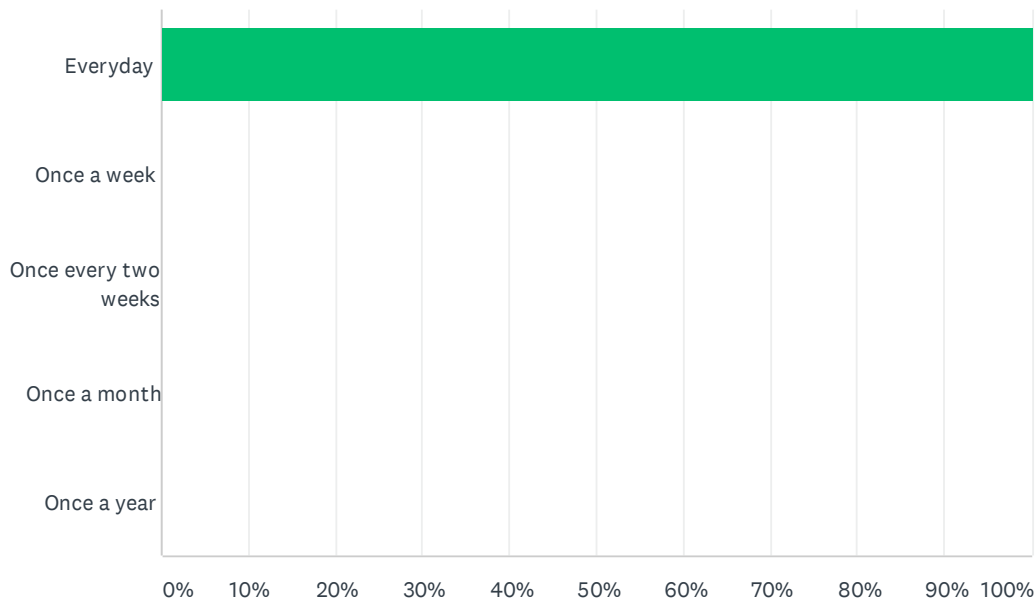
Answered: 1 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
SRT-Malheur Express: City of Ontario fixed-route bus	100.00%	1
Ontario/Vale/Nyssa Commuter bus	0.00%	0
SRT: Ontario/Fruitland/Payette bus	0.00%	0
Greyhound/Eastern Point bus	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 1		

Q3 How often do you ride any of these buses?

Answered: 1 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Everyday	100.00%	1
Once a week	0.00%	0
Once every two weeks	0.00%	0
Once a month	0.00%	0
Once a year	0.00%	0
TOTAL		1

TSP Website Comments (7/6/2020)

I think the city is on the right track. Defining our community into cohesive elements will be helpful for the future.
N/A

I missed the survey or projects between may 29-June 12. My suggestion is to go back to wave down and regular bus stops. And possible Stop or pick up near the bottle drop.

We need the sidewalks in front out residential houses fixed. Most people cannot afford to fix their driveways let alone the sidewalk that technically belongs to the city. people walk in the street rather than the weeds. Ya down town in great but what about residences. Why not create a city match. we pay x and the city pays x to get the sidewalks fixed for people to be able to walk around the town. This will drive the housing values up not to As a visually impaired member of Ontario, I am extremely interested in this matter. I wish I would have known about this much sooner, but as they say, "better late than never". With that said, I will jump right in. Torrance and I, Torrance being my best friend and Guide Dog, walk just about everywhere. To this date however, our localized area of travel has been strictly on the westside of Oregon street. The reasons of which are plenty; the main reason being that that is the side of town of which I live and spend most of my time. This however has changed due to recent circumstances, specifically my new job at the Department of Human Services. The result of this wonderful development in my life, is that I am now "forced" to invest more and more of my time on the eastside of our community. This has however presented some interesting challenges to say the least. For example, the few times I have ventured out, blindly walking around without really knowing where I am going, no pun intended, I quickly realized that very few sidewalks are completed. In other words, we discovered several situations where the sidewalk abruptly ended, where Torrance and I were forced to walk on the side of the street with heavy traffic just a few feet away from us. Torrance and I have also encountered random polls in the middle of the sidewalks, and random obstructions or obstacles such as mailboxes, overhanging branches or shrubbery, and significant cracks, potholes, and other abrasions to the walking surfaces. The only other challenges I have faced while walking through town, are the boxes placed on the sidewalks that advertise the yard-sales, and the random patches of Goatheads that we find ourselves in at times. These challenges of course are not specific to the eastside but are a constant problem all throughout our community. These obstacles and obstructions have led to cuts and scratches to my face, arms and legs, rips and tears to my clothes and jackets,

would like to see the improvements of side walks from SE 5th Ave down to by social security to east lane to thrifty lane(davita)..I noticed alot walkers down street for use to get to their distinations point...

From the College's perspective it is helpful to follow the current plans with regard to walking trails and access around the TVCC campus for students and the community. Traffic calming devices such as speed bumps and signage near campus will also improve pedestrian safety. We look forward to providing specific feedback

I think it would be awesome to have a bike or scooter rental location downtown for local commuters.

I've ridden a bicycle in a large majority of Ontario. Partly just to say that I have, partly for health reasons, and partly to commute. I've even ridden under the underpass and made a left hand turn from East Idaho to S Oregon.

Almost every bicycle is placed in a location I would not feel comfortable riding with my kids. The only exception is N Oregon seems to be pretty until the curve at Mallards. SW 4th St near TVCC regularly has drivers traveling 35+mph. Idaho Ave near the freeway overpass has drivers traveling 45-55 mph.

SW/SE 5th Ave seems prime to have bicycle lanes, there's even a stretch of yellow curb in a spot. Generally traffic is slower in the majority of that area and lots of pedestrians walk that route. The overpass on SE 5th the freeway is a bit troublesome due to the steepness and traffic not always paying attention. Bicycles lose a lot of speed on the up hill, where cars tend to speed up. I found riding directly in the middle the lane there slows traffic down and keeps me safe. Riding on the right side of the lane near the sidewalk nearly got me hit multiple times as trucks attempted to pass me. Like feel the wind from the extended trailer mirrors within inches of your head

Attachment B
East Idaho Avenue Open House -
Comments and Feedback

East Idaho Avenue Refinement Area Plan

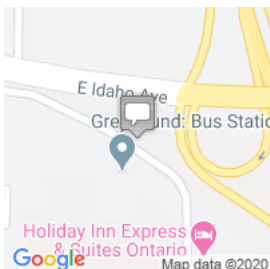
Comments submitted as of 7:55AM on June 22, 2020



As Fruitland City Administrator I would comment that if attention were given to pedestrian access on the westbound section of the Snake River Bridge and providing lighting on the north side of the bridge to increase safety, a major portion of pedestrian traffic crossing East Idaho could be avoided. Sidewalk only exists on the south side of the bridge. I believe most of the pedestrian traffic from the Idaho side is probably going to businesses on the north side of E. Idaho. Attention to developing sidewalk and lighting would spur sidewalk construction on the Idaho side from Allen Avenue west to the bridge. The reason we have not constructed sidewalk to date is to discourage unsafe pedestrian traffic on the north side of the bridge.



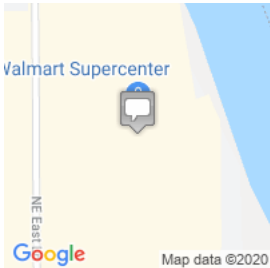
Crosswalk enhancements are needed in this area. Pedestrians who utilize public transportation have expressed they do not feel safe when crossing here. A bus pullout or turnout in this area would help to maintain the flow of traffic while public transit buses make stops in this area. Curb cut outs for accessibility at bus stop. Public transit does have funding for some of these improvements.



A connection from Idaho Ave to SE 10th Street to provide easier access to public transportation for individuals who walk or bike.



Eventually would like to see this stop moved on to East Lane or Idaho Ave. Public Transit buses have a hard time maneuvering through the small entrances/exits, parking lot and pedestrians coming in and out of the store.



I would not want to see the stops at Walmart moved out to the street. Many people with mobility issues would find that impossible to navigate. For myself, my mobility is such that having to walk any but an extremely short distance would not be possible and it would affect my ability to patronize local businesses.

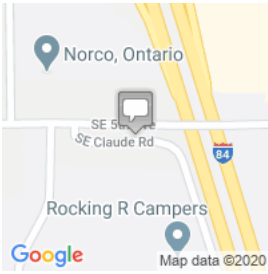


I would like to recommend that more thought be given to mobility issues and that benches/seating be provided at regular intervals, whether that is on the streets or along walkways/paths. It would make a huge difference in my ability to enjoy and explore my community and would add much to my ability to exercise within my capabilities - and to my quality of life as well.

In addition, please keep in mind that not all mobility issues involve wheelchairs and scooters. I have neither, yet I do have multiple, non-visible disabilities that affect how much and how far I can walk before needing to rest. And I'm not the only one in our community, by a long shot. For the same reasons, I would want more bus stops. I have not been able to use public transportation since the system changed to regular, very distanced stops and I've been told that Malheur Transportation is no longer providing door-to-door service except for medical transportation rides. Those are two options that did exist, but exist no longer. Even with a cane, I can't navigate the changes.



People getting out of the dollar store or DHS parking lot is hard with so much traffic if something could be in place to have the flow better that would be great. I think the issue is also on the other side of the road as well for people trying to get out by harbor freight or from Waremart.



Additional improvements also needed to be added to SE 5th Ave. It has a sharp gravel incline with no walking path except over the bridge. This cuts off working class and working poor families who live near the bridge from accessing services. I've seen many parents with strollers trying to ascend over this bridge and pedestrians are far too close to the traffic that crosses over. I'm 100% supportive of improvements to E Idaho Ave, but this bridge has always been a major concern for me.



At all sections of E Idaho Ave, I would appreciate more buffers between foot traffic and the road. I sometimes see children crossing with parents and it just seems SOOOOO unsafe.



The intersection at SE 5th and SE 1st Ave is very congested for an under developed intersection and the amount of traffic. Also, there needs to be crosswalk construction to assure safety of pedestrians crossing East Ln.



Lot of hold up for getting out of these businesses



Lot of hold up for getting out of these businesses



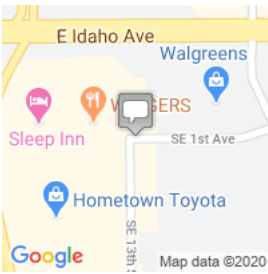
This very narrow egress and ingress to these retail centers. It's not uncommon for people to get held up turning right into the center and coming out.



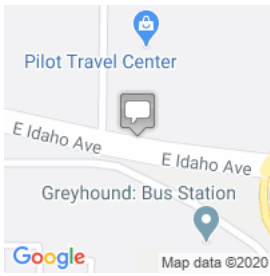
People have to walk a long way to get around the fence a break in the fence and a path to the bus station would be very valuable.



Future River Trail head



This turn is a little confusing about who has the right of way.



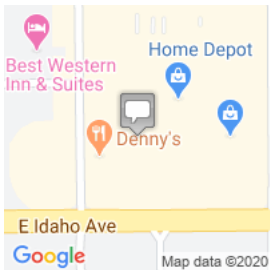
A lot of people making illegal u-turns coming out of Weedology.



Better signage from freeway off ramps guiding folks to businesses on Goodfellow St



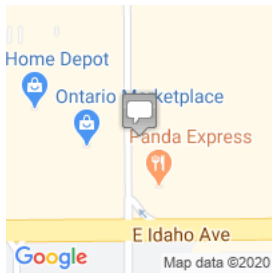
I have noticed that traffic will get held up on the bridge. I know that the bridge is maintained but having the bridge reinforced could increase safety considering how old the bridge is. Also caution lights that activate when traffic is held up would give drivers and pedestrians a choice to continue or to turn around.



Traffic goes through here. It has almost began to be used as a main roadway. Extra lighting and walk ways may help. Finding a way for the traffic to flow better would be good.



Future redesign of fixed route bus services would like to include additional transit bus stops along Idaho Ave., East Lane, Goodfellow and possibly 13th St.



Very narrow entrance. Public transit buses have difficulties entering parking lot in order to make stop at Walmart.



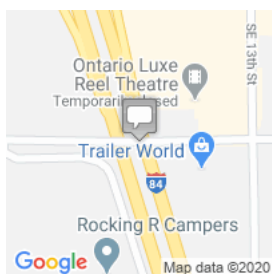
Public transit has been utilizing this entrance during busy times in order to avoid narrow entrances off of East Lane. However, this entrance is also very narrow and public transit buses have difficulties turning right in to this parking lot area as well.



There seems to be a lot of confusion with the new stop signs at this intersection, many do not know when to go or many do not even abide to the STOP sign at all. These stop signs have also caused a lot of traffic build up due to the traffic flowing in from SE Goodfellow St. and those exiting the Blue Bird Car Wash.



The abundance of traffic flow on this road is dangerous for how many vehicles are trying to enter and exit to the businesses along East Lane. Many people do not wait for vehicles to turn, so they pull out from behind the vehicle that is stopped to turn and the road is not large enough to accommodate this action. This is extremely unsafe.



There is heavy pedestrian traffic across this overpass. I think it would be safer if there were sidewalks along the entirety of the overpass and continues down the road on both sides.



Better signage to inform drivers who has the right of way when continuing straight at the traffic light. It is confusing and seems to be more of a guessing game as to who will be going.



Suggest implementing some sort of traffic control at this intersection. Traffic on SE 5th ave can get heavy and it is hard to get on from SE 10th at times. More traffic is building due to dispensary opening as well.



With an increase of traffic flow exiting the new businesses on E Idaho Ave, there has been an increase in U-turns at this stop light. This road is not quite large enough to accommodate U-turns, many vehicles have to fully stop during their U-turn and back up to clear the curb, which delays traffic and is dangerous for all involved. Also when vehicles are turning right on SE 4th Street when able, there is confusion when there is U-turns as well.

Comments Received via Phone or Email

Ontario TSP Update – 7/6/2020

Respondent 1

- Would like to see increased bus service through town. Right now it's a long walk to the nearest bus stop, and she relies on the bus to get to/from Wal-Mart since she does not drive.

- A lot of people use the bus to get to/from work on East Idaho Avenue, too. Extending service hours would be helpful for them.

- Would like more signs for bus stops