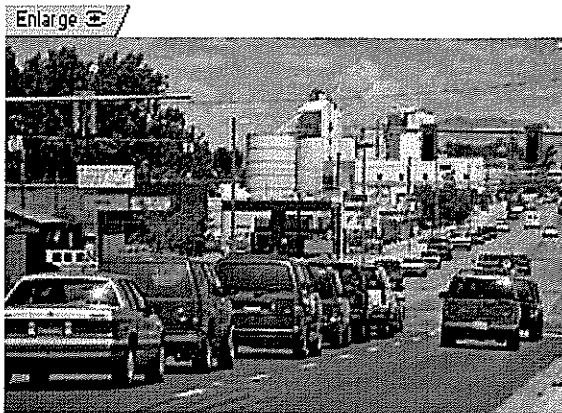


1/20/05

Consultant says 'split corridor' is way to go in Meridian

80 Meridian residents attend meeting on easing traffic jams



Idaho Statesman file photo

City and Ada County Highway District officials are looking for a way to ease traffic on Main Street and Meridian Road through downtown Meridian. Residents met Wednesday night to discuss three possible alternatives for redistributing traffic.

[Compare maps of the options for Meridian traffic](#)

(.PDF - 27 kB)

What's next?

- Public comments from Wednesday night's meeting will be compiled and submitted to city officials.
- City staff and consultant Tom Hudson will put together a final report, which they'll turn over to the city in early February.
- The plan will be discussed in public hearings on amendments to the city's comprehensive plan. The hearings will be held by the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council. That will happen in May at the earliest.

Kathleen Kreller

The Idaho Statesman | Edition Date: 01-20-2005

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MERIDIAN — A "split corridor" plan for Meridian Road and Main Street is the best alternative for easing traffic congestion in Meridian's downtown, a consultant told a crowd of residents Wednesday night.

Tom Hudson of Moscow-based Hudson Co., a consultant hired by the city and Ada County Highway District, presented three options for improving downtown traffic flow to about 80 residents at Cole Valley Christian School.

Hudson said planners used 19 criteria to rate the options, such as reasonable maintenance costs and promoting a pedestrian-friendly environment, and the split corridor met the most.

Here are the options:

- **Split corridor:** A modified one-way couplet on Meridian Road and Main Street from Central Avenue to the railroad tracks north of Franklin Road. Meridian Road would expand to five lanes north of the tracks. Main Street would remain as is north of the tracks with a new connection to Meridian Road. Cost is estimated at \$8.3 million.
- **Widen Meridian Road:** Expand the roadway to five lanes and realign as the primary north-south route through downtown. Main Street remains as is. Cost estimated at \$9.9 million.
- **One-way couplet:** One-way traffic on Meridian Road and Main Street from Central Drive to Fairview Avenue. Main Street traffic directed north. Meridian Road traffic directed south toward Interstate 84. Cost estimated at \$5.7 million.

Dean Mayes, a Meridian resident since 1931, said he didn't like any of the options.

"I would like to see them do nothing," said Mayes. "Let people fight the traffic. Then they will find another way."

But nearly every other resident in the packed room raised a hand when Hudson asked whether something must be done.

"We should all sing 'Kum Ba Yah,'" Hudson said. "We all have something in common."

Dennis Bailey, who owns a dental supply company on Linder Road, said he thinks the city is a step ahead of itself.

The city and county should pursue a new interchange at Interstate 84 and Ten Mile Road before looking at downtown

traffic patterns, Bailey said.

"They have to have another way of getting people back and forth," he said. "We can't tear (Meridian Road and Main Street) up until they have another way of getting people through town."

Resident Judy Ross, who's owned property in the Ten Mile Road area for 30 years, said widening Meridian Road to five lanes is the best option.

"The other ones are not going to solve the problems coming down the road," Ross said of the most expensive of the three options. "Cost now or cost later. It's time to bite the bullet."

The city of Meridian and Ada County Highway District paid for Hudson's study to determine the best way to limit cars driving through downtown to and from Interstate 84. The project is meant to direct road routes and traffic levels through the downtown core as Meridian grows.

A months-long study to hash out the financial future and appearance of the city's Old Town district determined the area should become walker-friendly, with street-level shops, offices and restaurants.

Traffic management is pointed to as one of the critical next steps in the city's revitalization plan. Road patterns and traffic flow had to be re-evaluated because of startling traffic statistics, Meridian Traffic Coordinator Steve Siddoway said.

Meridian Road currently carries more than 12,000 vehicles each day north of Franklin Road. Main Street carries over 19,000 vehicles per day. That equals more than 31,000 vehicles per day traveling through the downtown Meridian corridor, Siddoway said.

Compare downtown Meridian's traffic volume with that of downtown Boise: Boise's Idaho Street carries between 6,000 and 10,000 vehicles per day, while Main Street carries between 9,000 and 10,000 vehicles daily.