

New Karcher interchange opens

By Sandra Forester

Idaho Statesman | Edition Date: 12/13/06

Karcher interchange opened late Tuesday afternoon as the sky darkened and rain fell.

"It beats driving in and around the sugar beet factory or down the boulevard," said Cheryl Haller, a Marsing resident who endured the rain and cold to attend the interchange's opening ceremony. "I think it's going to alleviate congestion at the other interchanges."

More than 100 residents and officials huddled around heaters or under umbrellas and tents for a celebration at 2 p.m. Tuesday. Nampa Mayor Tom Dale and other local officials thanked those involved in building the \$30 million interchange. They put their signatures on a highway sign and were hoisted into the air to hang the sign from a pole.

"This is a vision that started more than 20 years ago," Dale said. "There's a host of people who have made this happen."

"I remember with excitement when the interstate opened (in the early 1960s). It was a way out of Nampa to shopping and jobs, said M.C. Niland, chair of the Nampa Chamber of Commerce board.

The area around Karcher Road in Nampa has become a retail and entertainment destination for the Treasure Valley, attracting development such as the new Treasure Valley Marketplace and Mercy Medical Center's planned office building and hospital northeast of the interchange, she said.

The new interchange is "a way to draw people back into our town," Niland said. "None of this (development) would be happening without this interchange."

Dale said the railroad tracks, freeway and Indian Creek are no longer obstacles to growth north of I-84 because of the access created by the interchange.

"This is a huge deal for the city of Nampa," he said. "This area will be a great job base and economic engine."

Commuters also will find relief, he said. "We'll be able to get them to the freeway a lot quicker," Dale said.

"I think it's really exciting. It's going to bring a lot of industry right off the interstate," said Marilyn Diaz, a Marsing resident.

Some said they wouldn't have missed the historic event, including Ken Karcher, grandson of George and Elizabeth Karcher who once owned much of the land south of the interchange.

"It's pretty interesting," Karcher said. "My grandfather would be surprised what his sagebrush farm turned into."

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More plans for I-84

Idaho Transportation Department will hold two open houses on widening Interstate 84 from Garrity Boulevard to Meridian Road, beginning in the fall of 2007. Open houses will be held:

- Today from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Idaho Center, 16200 Idaho Center Blvd., Nampa.
- Thursday from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Meridian Police Department, 1401 E. Watertower Ave., Meridian.