

Transportation Infrastructure in Cache Valley

With the completion of road transfers between local entities in Cache County and the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT), many in the valley are breathing a sigh of relief. Tenth West and 2500 North will eventually be built out as a second arterial for the core metropolitan area with state funding approved for road and intersection improvements. In addition, significant improvements are taking place on SR-30. These improvements notwithstanding, transportation issues are not going away and in fact, the size and scope of transportation issues are increasing. Here are some of the bigger lessons learned:

- Help doesn't come quickly or timely. Main Street has become increasingly congested. While the new arterial will help, it will not be fully up and running for 3-5 years.
- Even with the improvements to 10th West and 2500 North, traffic volumes on Main Street are not likely to decrease. New growth traffic volumes are likely to keep Main Street at current levels while 10th West volumes increase.
- The federal funds for the 3200 South project in Nibley cover 80% of the project construction cost. The project had to be shortened 50% so as not to overrun available funding. These funds, allocated through congressional action, are referred to as Congressional Earmarks. Eighty percent of the funding for the 200 East project in Logan is from federal earmarks. The Logan 600 East "Short" Dugway project gets funds from the same source. This funding source will also not be available for future projects.
- Other funding sources, such as the Non-Urban Federal Funds, Bridge Replacement Funds, and Enhancement Funds are available for use in Cache Valley, but available fund levels can meet only about 20% of the needs.
- The only reliable funding source, except for community general funds, for local streets and roads is from the state B and C funding source. This funding source is variable, covers only road maintenance and is not adequate for new construction.
- Help is not cheap. In the transfer of 10th West to the state, a significant number of state roads had to be taken over by local entities. While we had ability to do this for 10th West, there is not an endless list of assets to trade in the future.
- Cache Valley will have an increasingly difficult time competing for limited transportation funding given the growth related demands in places like Utah County and the St. George area. The state has plans for big road projects on the Wasatch Front. In total, it will be difficult to get the state's attention.
- Connections between local government entities, the state and even federal agencies are going to be essential for most transportation projects that will have major impact.

What do we see as issues going forward? Here are our key challenges:

- Stronger local planning, short and long term. Are individual government entities committed to working together? Do we have the right forums for resolving problems?
- Financing. We are becoming more dependent on revenue from outside the valley as the costs of projects escalate. (Note: the cost increase is due to both the increase in basic construction costs and the increase in the magnitude of projects being undertaken.) These out-of-valley funds are becoming more difficult to obtain. UDOT has indicated that if we are not willing to raise additional money internal to the valley, they will be less willing to

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share from the state coffers. The ¼ cent sales tax increase for roads should be leveraged to maximize state and federal funding for local road improvements.

- Management of current resources. Do we have plans for proactive, innovative access management of our current key arterials? Do we have buy-in for discussion, decision and cooperation from businesses and government entities for access management?
- Future corridor plans. We need to identify and start planning now for new corridors. The following elements should be evaluated as part of a valley wide transportation master plan and assigned an appropriate priority:
 1. A limited access western arterial. Between 1400 West and 1800 West extending from 89/91 to north of Smithfield.
 2. West side highway. What improvements/re-routing will be needed for SR 23?
 3. South valley plan. We need one.
- Freight transportation. Great roads will move the bulk of freight but rail and air add significantly to the overall movement of freight. We need to work proactively to maintain and improve our railroad access. We need plans for airport development to maximize the use of that asset. Both of these transportation assets can attract business to the valley and strengthen our economic base.

The recent transportation developments have been significant. The 10th West transfer, the start-up and dramatic increase in air cargo and the ongoing efforts in freight planning are commendable. Looking forward, the ¼ cent sales tax increase for roads will result in a consistent local source of funds for improvements, but the pace for planning and assessment of potential uses should quicken given the needs, environment and lead times we face to continue to solve our transportation challenges.