

Sugar City Recommendation on East Parkway Corridor

To Rexburg and Madison County Officials at the Courthouse

(Project Keller's favored option)

Here is the favored option for the East Parkway Corridor recommended by Keller Associates.

Last month, Sugar City voted unanimously in support of this option, with two minor adjustments.

(Project Sugar City's adjusted option)

We opted not to extend the corridor to 7th West and to end it at 7th East. We believe these extensions are unnecessary.

(Use the laser pointer to show the extensions.)

Ultimately, we decided Keller's favored option was best, all things considered.

We agree with Keller engineers that the parkway should be a five-lane road, with two lanes in each direction and a center turn lane. A right of way width of 130 feet would allow for curbs, landscaped drainage swales, a shared-use bike and pedestrian path, and buffers.

Given anticipated growth in our region in the coming decades, however, we feel the East Parkway Corridor is insufficient.

We recommend that an additional corridor – a beltway – be planned east of the parkway to further serve the region.

Ideally, such a corridor would run through an uninhabited area east of our community. We envisioned this route here (use the laser pointer to show the route through the wetlands), which is far enough away from virtually all homeowners yet close enough to developing areas to be serviceable.

But since this route traverses wetlands, the consultant and state transportation officials informed me that such a proposal would be a tough – if not impossible – sell. Consequently, we tried to identify the least-intrusive route that would be buildable.

(Project Sugar City's beltway idea.)

We believe that upcoming growth may require such a corridor.

This beltway also would be a five-lane urban arterial, carrying fast-moving traffic between Idaho 33 on the north and University Boulevard on the south.

(Use the laser pointer to show the boundaries.)

This beltway idea has the general support of the Idaho Transportation Department, Keller Associates and Sugar City. At least the concept of such a route does.

We propose that an application for a beltway come roughly 10 to 15 years after the parkway is constructed.

The route shown here seems best, given agricultural, environmental and landowner considerations.

Please understand, though, that the exact location for each of the five-lane urban arterials would be fine tuned during a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis required for federal aid. This NEPA process selects the actual route.

(Project and discuss Sugar City's beltway idea on the north end.)

This is how the beltway might look on the north end. This is a map from Sugar City's comprehensive plan, with the envisioned beltway route drawn in. The route runs just west of the Teton Island Canal and south through the country, skirting waterways and wetlands.

We thus suggest both the parkway and the beltway – the beltway to come approximately 10 to 15 years after the parkway...if needed.

We propose placing these corridors on our comprehensive plan maps now. Identifying them on our maps would enable planning and zoning commissions, developers and residents to better plan their affairs and invite federal aid for future project design and construction.

The two routes not only would improve traffic circulation throughout our community but also effectively service existing and future residents and encourage orderly development.

Again, these routes appear to be the least-intrusive corridors capable of meeting predictable state and federal concerns about prime farmland, wetlands and socio-economics. The corridors would be new roads so that access could be limited to main roads for safe and efficient traffic flow.

If the concept of these routes finds support, we suggest the county consider applying in 2015 through the Local Highway Technical Assistance Council (LHTAC) in Boise for federal aid to design and construct the parkway and applying in 2025 through LHTAC for federal aid to design and construct the beltway...if needed.

If a beltway is never needed, fine. But if it is, we have the corridor set aside on our maps. In our view, this is competent long-range planning.

The speed limit on the parkway would be 45 mph, while the speed limit on the beltway would be 55 mph.

All this said, we believe a route through the wetlands east of 2000 East (Sugar City's 7th East) may be ideal for planning purposes, since it would least intrude on local homeowners. We would be prepared to throw support behind such an option, if Rexburg and Madison County concur.

We conclude by stressing that state and federal agencies implementing the NEPA process select the actual route of such major corridors as a parkway and beltway. But we need to get a rational option for each of these corridors on our city and county transportation maps to use as a starting point for the NEPA examination and to reserve land for the needed right of way.