

Dear Road Wizard: What's with the Maple Grove Extension? Any progress? E.C., Boise

Yes. From Chinden Boulevard, you can now drive farther south beyond the turn to Mitchell Street and enter Mountain View Drive.

If you're asking about the dispute between ACHD and Settler's Irrigation District, which is halting progress on the bridge over Settler's Canal, I'm like you, hoping for peace in this tiny corner of the world.

Dear Road Wizard: I am a BSU student living in Meridian. I want to take a class that starts at 7:40 a.m. I plan to leave my house at 7:10 a.m. and hop on the Interstate. When precisely is the "rush hour" on I-84 and the Connector? J.S.@"

The peak rush hour on the eastbound Interstate and Connector falls between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. The hour before is half as busy. Only experience will tell you what these numbers mean to your travel time.

How do I know this? Wizardness, of course, but I went to a nifty website called itd.idaho.gov/planning/reports, clicked Traffic Survey and Analysis Data, then WIM/ATR Data, counter station #267 on the Southwest Idaho inset map, and tabbed "Published Reports." I randomly selected the school-day of March 1, 2006, and saw that at eastbound Connector Station 267 (near the Boise River crossing), the count for 6 a.m. to 7 a.m. was 2,345; for 7 a.m. to 8 a.m., 5,035.

You can get the picture without consuming any gasoline. Log onto ACHD's Home Page circa 7:10 a.m. Click Traffic Cams (screen left). A map shows conditions on the Interstate: open, slow, stop and go. The image refreshes every three minutes.

Click a camera location for the latest picture of traffic and "incidents" that may be slowing it down. It's static, but tells convincing stories of bumper-to-bumper in every lane or plenty of air between cars.

Dear Road Wizard: Highland Street was widened and new sidewalks installed east of Division Street. Sidewalks jog around the driveway curb cuts (towards the houses), effectively making the sidewalk eight feet wide. When people park in their driveways, their cars now block the new sidewalk. What was the rationale for this scenario? T.H.@"

The rationale was to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and create a continuous flat sidewalk at least four feet wide. This is a retrofit, obviously, here adding to the inventory of impervious surface and hardening the (mostly) residential streetscape.

When wheelchair users, the visually impaired, and balance challenged are taken into account from the beginning, the street/sidewalk/driveway combo usually functions together more gracefully.

Depending on wheelchair design, operators usually can negotiate inclines at street crossings and driveways. Visual- and balance-impaired pedestrians, however, find driveway slopes more hazardous.

The property owners probably know that new sidewalks bring new responsibilities. Keeping the sidewalk clear of obstructions is the law pretty much everywhere.

Dear Road Wizard: How might one begin getting speed bumps? I live on Ashland Drive in the Randolph-Robertson neighborhood. The streets north and south of us have speed bumps, so I'm thinking speeders use our street to avoid them. E.M.@

The predecessor to ACHD's traffic-calming specialist left a file on the earlier speed-bump project. Alas, it contains no clue as to why Ashland might have been omitted. Today's specialist will begin afresh.

Gears will engage after you telephone 387-6140 and ask for John. You two will get acquainted, and he'll mail you a kit. You and your neighbors will get together, beginning with a petition requesting the study. And then... Well, he'll tell you the rest.