

# **TRANSPORTATION**

## **Lava Hot Springs and Transportation**

The little City of Lava Hot Springs is uniquely situated in southeast Idaho. The City is cradled in between steep hills with narrow openings at each end. For transportation, this presents both challenges and opportunities. This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan explores and discusses the transportation challenges and opportunities under the headings of Traffic, Parking, Trails, Winter Road Maintenance and Light Industrial. Many of the opportunities discussed offer strategies that include annexing areas into the City limits. A summary of the annexation recommendations is provided at the end of the transportation chapter for the convenience of the Planning and Zoning Commission, developers, interested community members, visitors, business owners and landowners.

It is important to the City of Lava Hot Springs that support be given to the Idaho Transportation Department's plans for the Lava Hot Springs area. Changes are currently being planned that will decrease traffic density and make additional paved open space available to the community. The common approach to the City could also be altered to create desirable changes.

Lava Hot Springs commissioned a Transportation study that was completed in 2008. The study identifies characteristics and stresses related to transportation concerns. Excerpts from the study are available in the Appendix.

This chapter, along with other relevant parts of the Comprehensive Plan, should be used as a source of guidance. When developing the City's capital improvement projects, the Transportation Chapter can help address long term concerns related to roadways, sidewalks, crosswalks, drainage and safety.

It is important that the Lava Hot Springs Transportation Plan be utilized whenever annexation is being considered and when approval of development is under review.

## **Traffic**

The City of Lava Hot Springs has seasonal traffic concerns. An influx of tourists starts in May and ends in September. As a popular summer destination site, the City takes on heavy loads of visitor traffic that includes cars, trucks, campers, trailers, occasional busses and lots of foot traffic.

In addition to the seasonal demand, weekends always mean more traffic to Lava Hot Springs. The City attracts people for three day weekends during all seasons. Visitors start arriving in the late afternoon on Fridays and traffic gets difficult by 5:30 pm. A congestion of vehicles creates competition for on-street curb side parking, and increased foot traffic adds to safety concerns.

The corners of the street create visibility problems, which make turning vehicles slow and block traffic. Vehicles also drive too fast in the middle of the block and stop suddenly at the end of the block.

Not only is the downtown area impacted by the influx of visitors, the feeder roads to the outlying recreational areas are also negatively impacted. These traffic patterns need to be taken into account when considering future development and annexation.

When the new corridor diverts Highway 30 traffic away from the City, the area around Sunnyside or Maughan Road\* may become an entry to the City. These roadways could be used to ease traffic conditions if the uses of the road are carefully considered and development is planned in advance.

The Portneuf River is a well known float tubing paradise. The river runs through the City; visitors are able to get in the river at one end of the City and get out at the other. These visitors create an enormous amount of foot traffic by carrying their large inflated tubes upstream so they can float down. Many times the tubes are loaded onto vehicles and transported through town. These oversized loads create additional hazards. There is not enough room on the sidewalks or streets for tubers, pedestrians and vehicles. The Main Street bridge is particularly narrow and dangerous.

**Goal:** Provide avenues for the safe movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

### **Objectives:**

Consider the immediate and future needs of traffic flow.

Provide float tube visitors a safe and interesting way to travel that gets them off the Main Street and away from vehicle traffic.

Provide people with a safe and pleasant downtown experience.

Create an alternative trail system.

Carefully plan development from the City to the Maughan Road and Sunnyside areas.

### **Strategies:**

Install signs or other markers to direct tubers away from Main Street.

Construct a “walking bridge” to accompany the Main Street bridge.  
Investigate the possibility of using a park and ride model in the Maughan and Sunnyside areas to reduce the number of vehicles driving in the downtown area.  
Annex areas around Sunnyside or Maughan Road.

## **Parking**

When the citizens conducted Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis, the subject of parking came up repeatedly. Parking, Safety and Traffic are widespread concerns for the local residents. The citizenry is well aware that creative solutions are needed to address the parking and related safety concerns.

**Goal:** Provide adequate parking for residents and visitors.

### **Objectives:**

Identify parking areas that are under utilized and explore options for making them available for general parking.

Consider implementing a shuttle service to parking areas.

Explore the possibility of creating parking areas that connect to trails.

Explore parking solutions by using a new available roadway created by the bypass.

### **Strategies:**

Inventory all parking, both available and potential, and create a map for easy reference.

Invite the Idaho Department of Transportation to assist with any resources.

Research the possibility of using a park and ride model in the Maughan and/or Sunnyside areas.

## **Trails**

Outdoor enthusiasts often find themselves vacationing in Idaho. Rock climbers, road bikers, hikers, cyclists, mountain climbers and horse riders are attracted to the multitude of beautiful places in Idaho, Wyoming and Yellowstone Park. Lava Hot Springs attracts many of these visitors that look for walking and biking trails. Although some trails do exist they are difficult to find and not marked. Visitors walking and biking often end up on private land or in areas not suitable to their recreational needs. A network of trails that provide all levels of ability would serve local citizens and visitors. These trails would include greenway paths and other paths and trails of varying degrees of difficulty. This transportation option would help move activity and destination foot traffic off Main Street. Using trails would decrease congestion, lessen the safety concerns at the Main street corners, and improve safety for walkers, bikers and vehicles.

**Goal:** Provide non-vehicle options for transportation.

**Objectives:**

Utilize First Alley North behind the museum as a foot traffic connector for tubers.

Connect greenway trails to more difficult trails.

Provide visitors with information on area biking trails, equestrian trails, local fishing and camping areas.

**Strategies:**

Partner with other organizations to connect trails to one another.

Obtain rights-of-ways to connect trails, and mark trails to give access to hikers.

Work with land owners for access.

Consider using signs or other markers to direct tuber traffic away from Main Street.

**Winter Road Maintenance**

Winter Road Maintenance is a challenge for the City. It is hard to find a good place to put the snow once it is removed from busy areas. The snowmelt causes problems with drainage because many of the streets are on a steep hill. There is a fair amount of melt that runs downhill through properties and streets.

**Goal:** Keep streets and sidewalks clear of ice and snow.

**Objectives:**

Utilize open space areas for snow removal storage.

Find cost effective ways to address snow and ice removal.

**Strategies:**

Look into the possibility of using naturally occurring hot water for snow removal.

Negotiate use of sloped land or privately owned land for storage of snow.

Contact other mountain cities to find new ideas.

Consult with City maintenance staff for new ideas.

**Light Industrial**

An important part of the City's transportation is planning for potential industrial needs. The City of Lava Hot Springs welcomes light industry into their community. The new corridor that will bypass the City will significantly change the areas suitable to industry. The 2010 improvements to Highway 30, and the nearby access to railway, will provide opportunities that few small cities enjoy. Transportation changes can open up areas of industrial possibilities for the City. With careful planning, the City can select a location that provides access to road and rail while carefully preserving the aesthetics of the drive into the City for visitors that are the lifeblood of the community.

Potential areas for light manufacturing include west of the City, east of the existing City limits, and north of the railroad tracks. If the leaders of Lava Hot Springs can guide future

development of these potential industrial areas in a thoughtful, organized manner, the benefits to the community would be great.

**Goal:** Provide space for light industrial interests.

**Objectives:**

Use existing transportation resources to attract light industry.

Provide living wage jobs to local residents.

Preserve the view and ambiance in the approach of the City.

**Strategies:**

Identify potential light industrial sites.

Consider creating an industrial or business park.

Annex and/or purchase properties east and west of the City.

Map allowable industrial sites and post on City Web Page.

## **Summary of Annexation Recommendations**

The areas around Sunnyside or Maughan Road can be considered for annexation into the City. The Idaho Department of Transportation's planned corridor changes will make this area important to the City. This area will likely be an entry to the City and will be attractive to development. Annexation will allow the City to guide changes in a manner best suited to the needs of Lava Hot Springs.

There are other key areas that affect the future of the City and should be annexed over time. These include the Rodeo area, areas already receiving City services, and the area reaching from the Rail area to the mountain. These areas can be utilized to solve existing and future transportation needs such as traffic flow, parking and foot traffic moving from one area of town to another.

\*Sunnyside and Maughan areas are further defined in the appendix

Sunnyside is that area from the towns' western border, north of the river to the railroad tracks to the Sunnyside Road. Maughan Road area is the corridor along Maughan Road from City Limits to Highway 30 intersection.