

MAKE TETON PASS SAFER

What We Are Asking of WYDOT and ITD

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First, our thanks. WYDOT District 3 has acted, and we want to acknowledge that work before asking for more: revised gear-and-grade signage is going up in the corridor, and three variable message signs were placed on the western side of the Pass as of August 24.

A coalition of residents, businesses and elected officials asks the State to build on that start with a defined sequence of steps, grouped below by what can be done in weeks, in months, and within a year. Everything in the first group uses equipment and authority WYDOT already has.

In the next weeks — *operational steps requiring no new construction*

- **Extend the new "all drivers" gear messaging through the corridor.** District 3 has already begun replacing "Trucks Use Lower Gear" signs with messaging that speaks to every driver, which is exactly right — drivers of RVs and vehicles towing travel trailers do not read themselves as "trucks," so the old wording missed the people most at risk. We ask that the new signs be carried through the rest of the corridor, especially on the downgrades, where drivers need repeated reminders to stay in low gear and off the brakes.
- **Match the western-side signage on the eastern approach and descent.** The three variable message signs installed on the west side on August 24 are a meaningful improvement. The eastern downgrade needs the same treatment. We also ask for signing tied to the mandatory pullout described below, giving drivers specific information on the grade, arrestor locations, staying in low gear, not riding the brakes, and clearer no-parking zones near the arrestors. WYDOT and ITD have installed comparable signage on US 12, US 16 and US 95, so the templates already exist.
- **Stand up an interim vehicle check point at the Wyoming–Idaho state line.** A temporary mandatory pull-out, similar to watercraft inspection, where trucks, RVs and vehicles towing trailers stop at an information kiosk for grade instructions and a brake and gear check. This would intercept the exact drivers now ending up in trouble on the Pass.
- **Deploy portable variable message signs (two at each location) and highway advisory radio at all regional decision points by mid-September or sooner** — Swan Valley, Idaho Falls, Sugar City, Teton, Victor, Hoback Junction, Jackson and Wilson (see Sheet R-2 at the end of this document for the full node schedule). These are the last points at which a driver can still choose another route, and the equipment is already in State inventory or can be rented.
- **Formally request that Apple, Google, Waze and the RV and trucking navigation apps add grade and vehicle-type advisories for WYO 22 in both directions.** Most visitors arrive on the Pass because a routing app sent them there with no warning of a sustained 10% grade. The advisory should point heavier vehicles to the Snake River Canyon route. Initial conversations with Apple and WYDOT took place on August 26, and similar conversations are underway with Google.

In the next months — *design, programming and interagency commitments*

- **Fund and begin design of a runaway-vehicle arrestor bed on the Wyoming descent.** A driver who has lost brakes below the existing Catch-Net arrestor has no engineered place to stop. A gravel arrestor bed is the proven and more recognizable remedy on comparable grades such as the US 95 Lewiston Grade, and could be built east of Trail Creek Road with a context-sensitive design that also protects Wilson and the intersections below. Make Teton Pass Safer members have had initial conversations with the property owners, who appear willing to revisit the idea of an arrestor in this location.
- **Consider pairing any vehicle-type restriction with a local-use permit for certified drivers and vehicles.** A blanket ban would strand the contractors, delivery vehicles, transit buses and commuters who cross daily. A permit tied to driver certification, brake inspection and vehicle rating restricts the through-traffic causing the crashes while keeping the valley running. A local training and certification program could be stood up to qualify those drivers and vehicles.
- **Support reintroduction of weigh-in-motion enforcement legislation.** The WIM system is already doing its job on the detection side, but enforcement is not keeping pace. Over the last 18 months it produced 1,587 overweight triggers, which resulted in 28 documented Wyoming Highway Patrol intercepts — an intercept rate of 1.8%. That gap is a resource and authority problem more than a WYDOT one, and authorizing automated enforcement would give the posted weight limit real force. WYDOT's support would carry substantial weight in the next session.
- **Raise the penalties for overweight and brake-equipment violations, and post the amounts where drivers can see them.** At the levels set under W.S. 31-18-805, a citation can read as a cost of doing business rather than a deterrent, which blunts the effect of any detection system. We ask WYDOT to support raising the schedule for violations on designated mountain grades — and, separately and immediately, to post the dollar amounts on the approach signage. A number a driver can read from the road changes behavior more reliably than a general warning, and the posting itself requires no legislation.

Within the year — *permanent capital commitments*

- **Program and fund a permanent check point / port of entry at or near the state line.** The interim check point and turnaround should be a bridge to a permanent, staffed facility with the space, signage and enforcement capacity to screen every heavy vehicle entering the grade, and a safe turnaround for vehicles that are re-routed to the alternative route.
- **Install permanent variable message signs and highway advisory radio stations at all the regional decision points.** Replace the temporary equipment with a series of high-visibility permanent message signs and real-time radio advisories providing route guidance and warnings.
- **Pursue state and federal funding for the corridor as a package.** In 2020, this corridor won a [\\$25 million federal BUILD grant](#) for a \$43.9 million program of highway, pathway and transit improvements, with the leadership of US Senators Barrasso and Crapo.

That precedent makes corridor-wide safety funding credible and repeatable. The [2024 Teton Pass Corridor Study](#) provides a basis for this work.

We are grateful for the responsiveness District 3 has shown this summer and we are ready to help — with community outreach or anything else that is useful to the Department.

SHEET R-2 — Regional VMS / HAR and Checkpoint Location Concept

Installation nodes referenced in the first bullet above. Concept for discussion only — device inventory to be confirmed with WYDOT District 3 and ITD District 6.

