

# Construction Zone

For a century, traffic in Jackson Hole meant waiting on a herd of bison. Those days are gone. Summertime traffic is now oppressive because we've grown at a dizzying pace. Our overcrowded roadways are a testimony to the current state of affairs. They're an in-your-face, rubber-meets-the-road (literally) indication of how poorly we've managed growth.

Maybe those grand and very expensive plans—Comp Plan, Integrated Transportation Plan, Housing Action Plan—weren't all they were cracked up to be.

It didn't used to be like this. A trip from downtown to the West Bank is now a 45-minute, gas-and-brake crawl on a clogged Highway 22. Teton Pass and Snake River Canyon commutes are bumper-to-bumper and increasingly dangerous as motorists grow impatient. A left-hand turn in Jackson from June to September? Don't even think about it.

And the solution was supposedly the bus. It was a naïve and shortsighted answer to congested roadways. It didn't work. With few exceptions, ridership was always dismal.

It was never more than a "magic" Band-Aid that allowed planners to crank up the growth machine; more, always more.

Now we've entered the next phase. Population growth has taken us into the big growth era for roadways. They're now working on five lanes from town to Hoback, which will encourage sprawling growth south.

And there's the reconfigured "Y" intersection (beginning this month), the Tribal Trails connector (in design now by WYDOT), a roundabout at Highway 89 and Gros Ventre intersection (next year), and eventually a widening of Highway 22.

Is this the Jackson Hole you've yearned for? Probably not. We're looking at unending roadway disruption for the next several years.

How did it come to this? Simple, commercial development drives traffic growth. Big commercial growth drives big traffic growth. It's especially true in a resort area. More hotels, more housing development, more cars, wider roadways.

Things won't improve until our ever expanding tax collections stop being viewed as the holy grail of local success. It should be obvious by now: More tax collection equals decreased quality of life. There's a healthy growth rate, but we're way beyond that.

No matter what they say, town and county officials are after big growth, now. We have the lowest housing mitigation rate of any 1st rate Mountain Ski Town. Why? Because local officials are fully behind unbridled growth.

You'll know they've become interested in 'quality-of-life' when they get our mitigation rate up where it belongs.

We hate to be so blunt, but a good dose of reality is what best serves the community right now.

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you've yearned for?*

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