

EXHIBIT 1

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ROAD WARRIOR: Hoover Dam bypass traffic faces bottleneck along U.S. Highway 93

Imagine this: Cruising through Black Canyon at a cool 65 mph, cutting through the once-traffic-halting switchbacks at the Nevada boundary, jetting over washes and bounding toward Boulder City without delays.

Isn't that the image that was planted in the heads of long-haul truckers, commuters and tourists as we anticipated the opening of this impressive Hoover Dam bypass that stretches across the canyon 900 feet above the Colorado River?

For the next year, that vision is likely optimistic considering that the brand spanking new and smooth four-lane highway will choke down to two lanes about a half-mile south of the Hacienda hotel-casino and remain that way for a good distance.

In reality, could the new bridge throw us back to the past -- before truckers were banned from the Hoover Dam -- when it took but a minute for traffic to build up behind a big-rig battling the steep grade toward Boulder City?

"That's the \$64,000 question," said John Bradshaw, senior roadway designer for the Nevada Department of Transportation.

"We don't want to see the backup problems with trucks. We're trying to go full tilt to provide the capacity, provide a truck lane."

It's a bit astonishing that a collection of government agencies could scrape up \$240 million, construct a bridge universally referred to as an "engineering marvel," create miles of new roadway and open it all up without widening a two-mile stretch to ease traffic flow.

Plans for a bypass bridge had been in the works for years before construction finally began in 2005. Work was delayed two years after winds knocked down two cranes, which conceivably granted transportation officials even more time to make the needed improvements to the highway.

All this isn't lost on Bradshaw, who said his agency is in the early stages of design for the widening.

"With big projects like this, there is a long lead time and you hope everything goes well and you can tie it into Phase 2," improvements to U.S. Highway 93, he said. "There were problems. Since it didn't happen in that time frame, you have this interim condition."

The problems included the enormous price tag attached to initial plans to carve a bypass through mountains so that the road would completely circumvent Boulder City.

Politics also played a role. Not only were there battles over the cost, but some feared Boulder City

businesses would suffer.

The transportation division also has to deal with multiple federal agencies and private land owners to make improvements. The bottom line is there isn't much space to widen the road without negotiating various land agreements.

"There's a whole group of players that have an interest in what's going to happen here," Bradshaw said. "We are fairly confident we can at last widen it and add the additional lane."

Bradshaw expects a truck lane to be added in that two-mile stretch by next summer.

In the meantime, it's difficult to project how significant the backup might be. Much of that depends on whether truckers, who were prohibited from crossing Hoover Dam for security reasons after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, choose to return to the bypass route.

Long-haulers have since driven through Laughlin and Searchlight, which probably adds another half-hour to their trip to Las Vegas.

The upside is that the transportation department spent \$110 million widening and resurfacing U.S. Highway 95 to make it a more desirable alternative route for truckers.

Still, it's questionable whether truckers will continue to use the detour when they can shave time off their trip by driving across the bypass bridge. After all, in the hauling business, time is money. Without a doubt, these trucks won't be moving up the hill to Boulder City as fast as we would like.

"Is there a potential for a backup? Probably," Bradshaw said. "If you get real heavy truck traffic, yes, that could be a problem."

We can all celebrate the opening of the spectacular bridge in November, but understand the real party probably won't begin until next summer, when the span can be fully appreciated.

If you have a question, tip or tirade, call Adrienne Packer at 702-387-2904, or send an e-mail to roadwarrior@reviewjournal.com. Please include your phone number.

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