The project team heading up a statewide Safe Routes to School grant program was asked by ITD to observe and suggest possible improvements to a school zone in Pocatello. The team observed conditions during a typical weekday morning in May to further get an understanding of typical conditions and gauge potential improvements. At issue is the travel route for school children due to the location of a subdivision northwest of Syringa Elementary School. The first phase of the subdivision has been built with additional homes to be constructed in the approximate area in the years to come. The principal road accessing the subdivision is Eastpointe Drive. Eastpointe Drive intersects with Hiline Road, which essentially connects with the school. At issue is how school children are able or instructed to walk to school.

Currently few students walk via the Eastpointe route. This is due to few students living in the subdivision specifically on the street, the topography which makes the walk more difficult, the presence of a canal running parallel to Hiline Road, a fence along the school property, and the slope leading from Hiline to the campus directly across from the Hiline/Eastpointe intersection. These conditions suggest that a crossing at Eastpointe is not the proper solution at this time. A crossing may be warranted when more houses are built uphill from the intersection or Hiline is rebuilt.

The following summary is intended to present options and possibilities other than a crossing at Eastpointe to improve the current conditions based on the knowledge and expertise of the Safe Routes to School project team.

Syringa Elementary School (Pictured in the lower right) is in a largely residential area. Hiline is an arterial roadway slated to be widened and improved in the future to include amongst other facilities a curb/gutter/sidewalk and a multiuse pathway.

The neighborhood located east of the campus is located on a hill and contains street segments with steep slopes making walking or bicycling a challenge for children.

Adding to the challenge of safety is the higher volumes of vehicles using Hiline, the canal and pathway, and limited safe designated crossings to the school.

This project was conducted by Idaho Smart Growth and Vitruvian Planning with support from the Idaho Transportation Department.
Having witnessed the conditions and knowing the overall future direction of the City, the project team highly recommends a pathway to take advantage of the canal route for not only the local movement of Syringa students but also for the balance of the community. The wide bank, distance to water, gradual slope and very slow flowing current of the canal means generally safe conditions to walk or bike on if the pathway surface is improved. The current pathway is located far enough from the canal banks that it is no different than a greenway along a river, bay or similar body of water. The fact that Pocatello is planning such improvements to the community further lends credibility and validity to moving forward as soon as practical. Though grading and paving a path should be relatively simple to construct, the slope creates a challenge to building potential access ramps that will be needed for users to access local intersecting streets such as Griffith Road. The pathway can be built as a standalone project or in conjunction with the road improvement slated for Hilineline in the future. However, we see no reason to wait for a distant project and recommend moving forward with interim improvements.

Until the more significant project can be constructed, the city and school district should work with the canal company to have the canal pathway graded, leveled and topped with gravel or asphalt. By doing so, the path would have fewer trip hazards, be less susceptible to capturing stormwater and the affiliated puddles and define the walking area for users. Next, by working toward a long-term solution, such as described, grade two access ramps off Hilineline at Griffith to the 12:1 slope ratio needed for eventual ADA compliance. Sight lines, visibility and awareness of pedestrians by motorists should all be improved similar to the depictions below. Lastly, stripe a crosswalk spanning Hilineline at Griffith, and add appropriate signage and landing as required. We observed many users, including students, on this route and cross-

By embracing the presence of the canal, the community could eventually have a greenway segment which no only improves general bike/ped mobility but also delivers students from the adjoining and future neighborhoods to Syringa Elementary School. Use of the Continental paint scheme for the crosswalk will also help break up the asphalt and further raise awareness as to the presence of children to motorists along the Hilineline corridor.
To further help the movement of pedestrians and bicyclists along the corridor, make additional improvements at the intersection of Hilene and El Rancho. Accommodate increased movements for every mode especially with a canal pathway.

1. Construct a curb extension on the northeast corner of the intersection to subject pedestrians to less risk and traffic exposure due to the shorter crossing distance. This will also slow turning vehicles.

2. Paving and formalizing the bus pull out would likely improve the operations of both Hilene and nearby intersection. Eventual placement of a traffic signal would create necessary traffic gaps for buses to rejoin the flow of traffic. The pull out will also work well in conjunction with the pathway as a general Transportation Demand Management strategy as trip chaining to ped/bike is highly likely.

3. Adding street trees near the bus pull out lane will help improve aesthetics and calm traffic.

4. Construct a sidewalk segment and corner curb ramps on the west side of Hilene from El Rancho to McCormack St. to complete the gap in the sidewalk network.

One point worth noting is how the pathway intersects the western leg of El Rancho. In the long-term the pathway should have as few conflict points as possible. An underpass at El Rancho should be considered to permit the continual movement of users, avoid crossing conflicts and continue the pathway south. Moving pathway users across the canal where it crosses Hilene south of MaCormack would likely require a new bridge that could accommodate both the car traffic and pathway.

In the meantime pathway users should be directed to the at grade crossing at the northern leg of the El Rancho intersection, and routed to a bike lane or a sidepath.