

Idaho Rail Plan Update 2025



Why Do a Rail Plan?

- A rail plan provides ITD:
 - » An understanding the state's rail system and how it serves Idaho's businesses, residents, and visitors
 - » Opportunities to build partnerships with rail providers and users
 - » Support economic opportunities
- Plan will review key themes like infrastructure condition, technology advancements, population and economic growth, safety, etc.
- Plan was last updated in [2013](#)

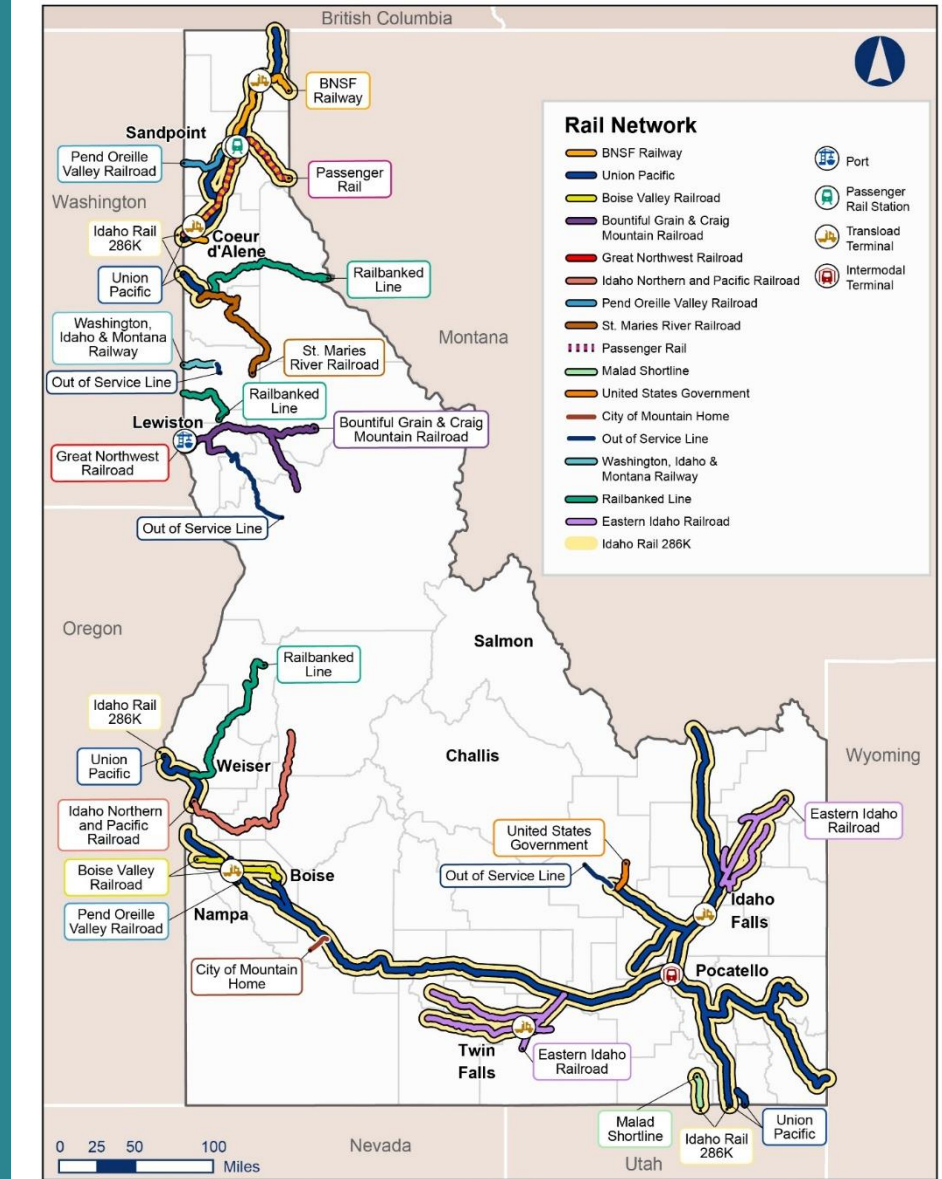


Overview of Idaho's Rail System



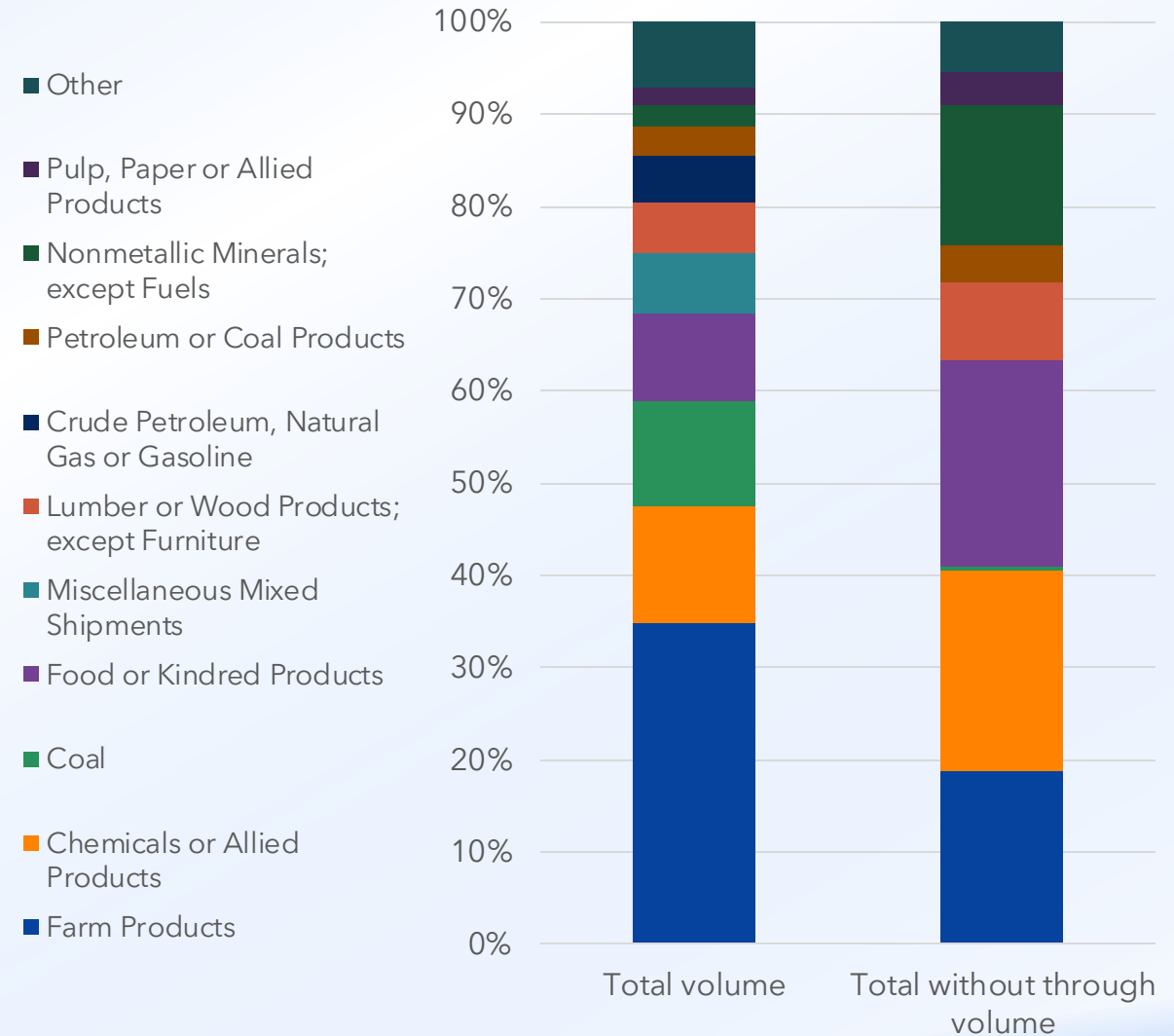
Idaho's Rail System

- 1,828 miles of privately-owned rail track
 - » Primarily serves freight
- Idaho's freight rail network carried 130 million tons in 2021
- Idaho's only active passenger station is Amtrak's Sandpoint station, which carried more than 6,500 passengers in 2023



Idaho's Freight Rail Volumes

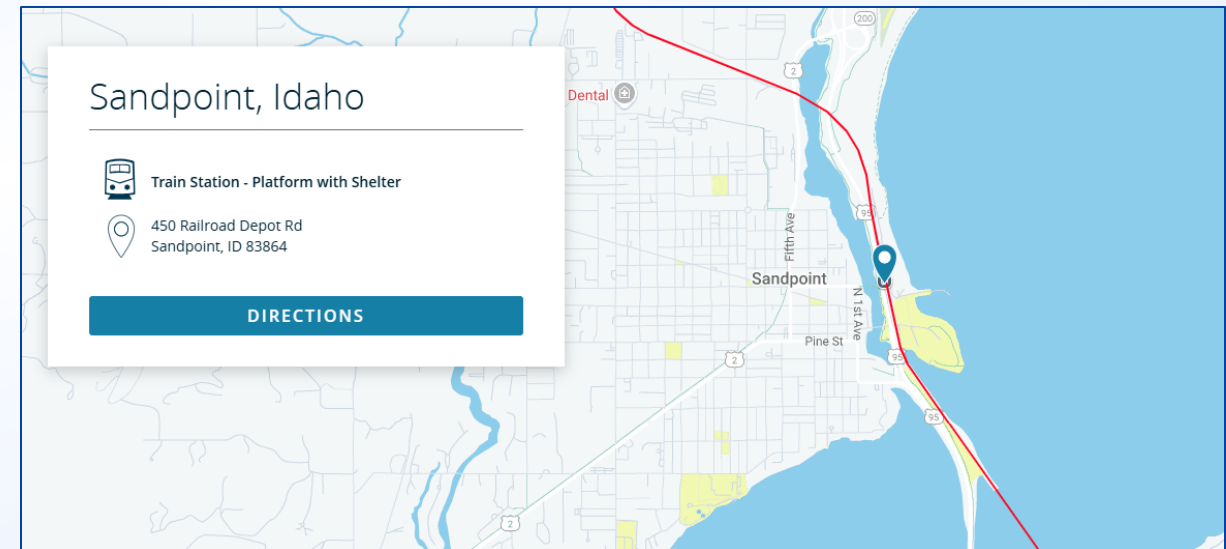
- Idaho's railroads move about 130 million tons annually
 - » However, more than 85% is through traffic and does not stop
 - » Primarily farm products
- Idaho has 8 rail/truck transload facilities, including a waterway connection at Port of Lewiston, where rail freight is loaded on to trucks for distribution
- Idaho has 1 rail intermodal container facility in Pocatello where freight loads are transferred from one track to another



Source: Surface Transportation Board Confidential Carload Waybill Sample (2021)

Passenger Rail

- Only active passenger rail station in Idaho is in Sandpoint
- Operated by Amtrak
- Runs between Chicago and Portland or Seattle
- Daily service with one train in each direction
 - » 12:55 a.m. westbound
 - » 2:20 a.m. eastbound



Source: Amtrak



ITD's Role and Funding Availability

- ITD plays a limited role in investing in the state rail system:
 - » Administering \$8 million annually in federal funding to improve safety at highway/rail at-grade crossings
 - » Helps rail industry, other government entities like cities and highway districts to apply for federal funding
 - » Partnering with railroads on railroad-led projects and investments
- Idaho has no dedicated sources of funding for freight or passenger rail beyond match funds for federally-funded improvement at rail crossings



Plan Vision and Goals



Vision and Goals Process

- To develop the vision and goals, ITD reviewed existing plans, interviewed industry partners and sought feedback from the Freight Advisory Committee
- The FAC is made up of volunteer industry partners from around the state to advise the department on plans, policies, etc.



State Rail Plan Vision

Idaho will work with its rail providers and rail customers to deliver a safe and innovative rail system that drives economic opportunity and meets the State's evolving freight and passenger transportation needs.



Idaho Rail Plan Goals

- The Freight Advisory Committee identified the below goals to achieve the vision
- Goal 1: Strategic Investment
 - » Invest limited available funding strategically in the rail system to improve safety, maximize existing capacity, preserve infrastructure, and drive innovation.
- Goal 2: Partnership & Engagement
 - » Participate in effective partnerships that leverage resources and opportunities for the rail system.



GOAL 1: Strategic Investment



GOAL 1: Invest limited available funding strategically in the rail system to improve safety, maximize existing capacity, preserve infrastructure, and drive innovation.

- » Reduce the number of and potential for at-grade rail-highway accidents
- » Identify and improve existing infrastructure shortcomings
- » Coordinate safety investments with other planning processes and initiatives such as the State Freight Plan (SFP), Safety Action Plan (SAP), and Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)
- » Identify all potential sources of federal funds for application in addressing identified rail needs
- » Administer funding, as available, for rail service preservation and encourage the use of local funds for capital investments



GOAL 2: Partnership & Engagement



GOAL 2: Participate in effective partnerships that leverage resources and opportunities for the rail system.

- » Engage with public and private sector rail stakeholders to identify key opportunities to strengthen the rail network
- » Maintain communication regarding federal funding opportunities, including capital and other requirements



Idaho's Rail System SWOT Analysis



Idaho's Rail System SWOT

- ITD led an analysis with stakeholders to identify strategic opportunities for ITD, industry and communities

S

STRENGTHS

- Strong Market Connections
- Reliable and Well-Maintained Class I Rail Network
- Sufficient Rail Network Capacity

W

WEAKNESSES

- Limited Transload and Intermodal Capacity
- Low Freight Rail Market Share and Stagnant Rail Volumes
- Fragmented Rail System
- Increasing Rail Safety Incidents
- High Numbers of Highway/Rail At-Grade Crossings
- Lack of Dedicated Funding

O

OPPORTUNITIES

- Strong Global Demand for Idaho Commodities
- New Rail Technologies
- Alignment of Federal Priorities with Idaho's Industries
- Strong Population and Economic Growth

T

THREATS

- Predominance of Through Freight Traffic
- Stagnant Rail Volumes
- Short Line Railroad Infrastructure Needs
- Volatile International Trade Policy
- Increased Rail Activity in Urbanized Areas
- Freight and Rail Industry Labor Shortages
- Increasing Train Lengths

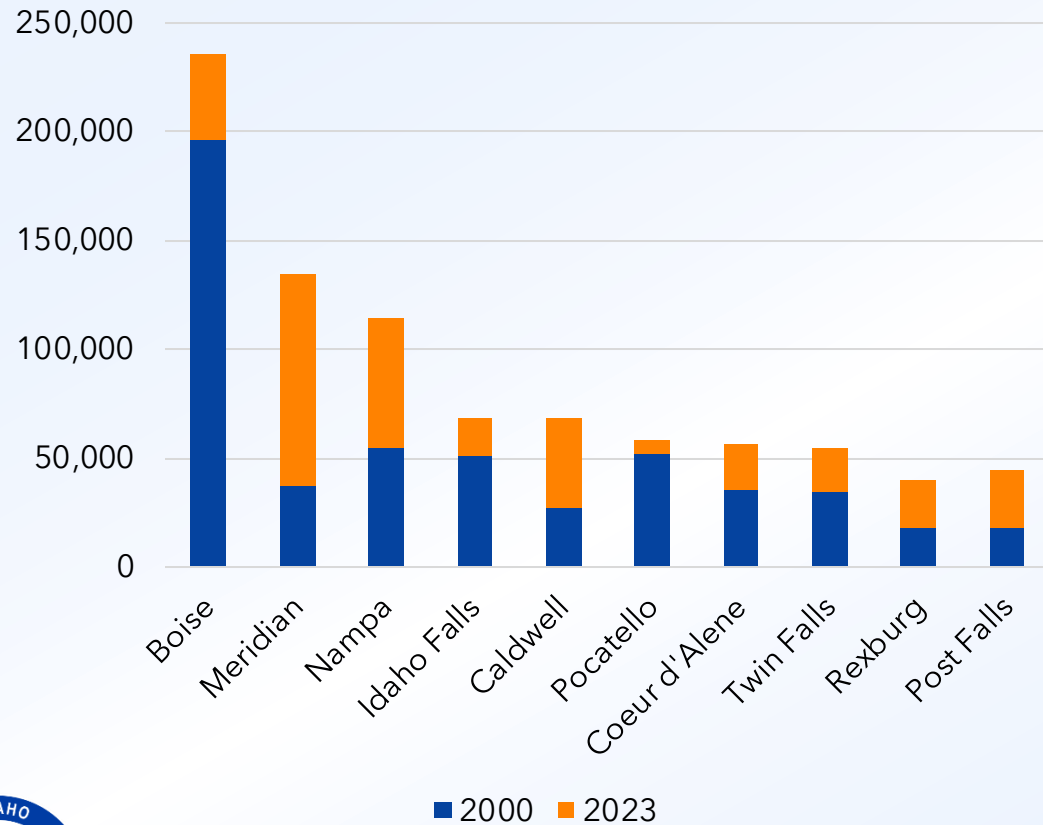


Strengths and Opportunities

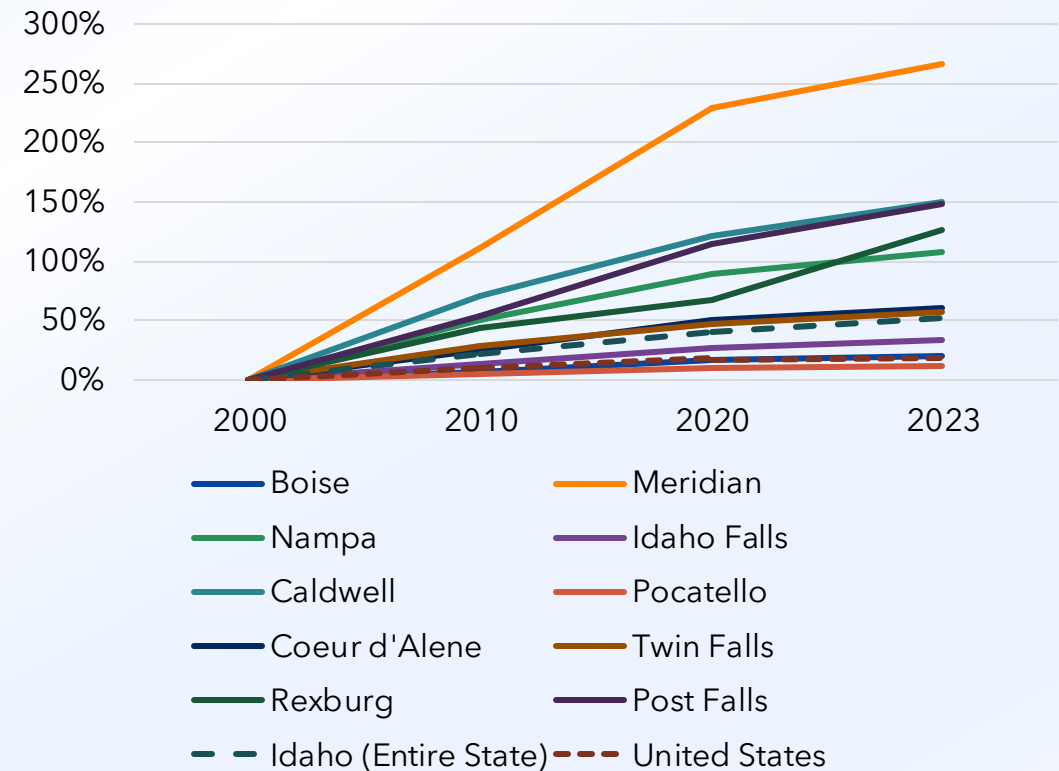


Population Growth Means More Demand for Transportation Services

Idaho's Urban Population and Growth



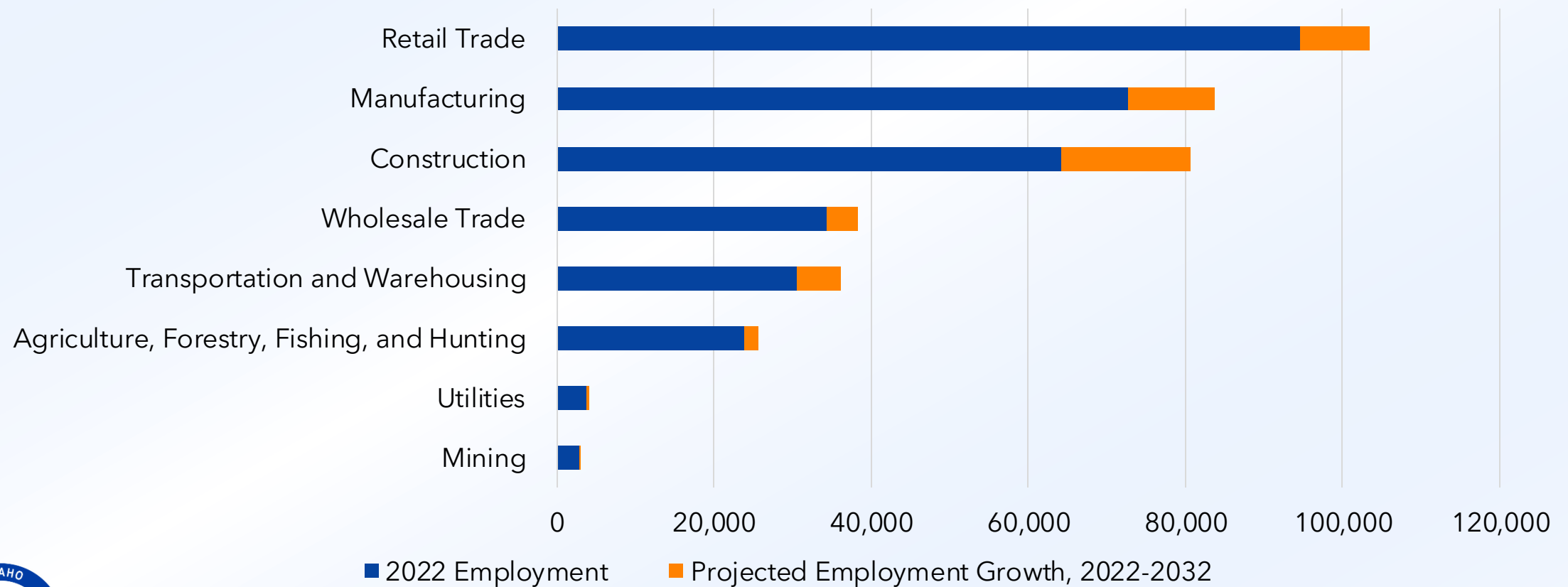
Idaho's Urban Population Growth Rates



Source: United States Census

Rail Supports Idaho's Economic Health

Idaho's Employment and Projected Growth in Rail Served Sectors



Source: BLS, QCEW

Infrastructure Condition and Reliability

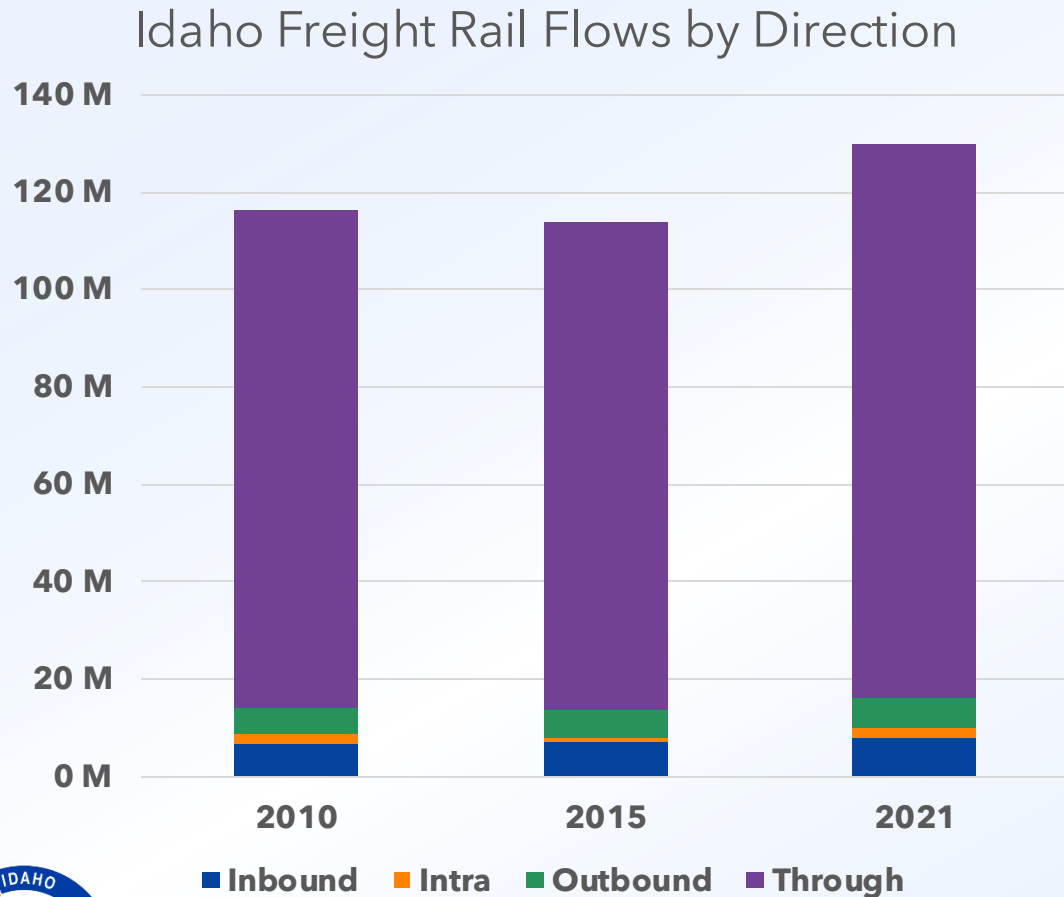
- Idaho's rail infrastructure is generally in very good condition
- No significant rail chokepoints identified in Idaho
- Potential rail capacity and expansion opportunities to be led by the industry:
 - » Rehabilitation of trackage between Banks and Cascade.
 - » Leveraging growth in the chemical and mining sectors to expand rail service.



Weaknesses and Threats



Freight Rail Flows



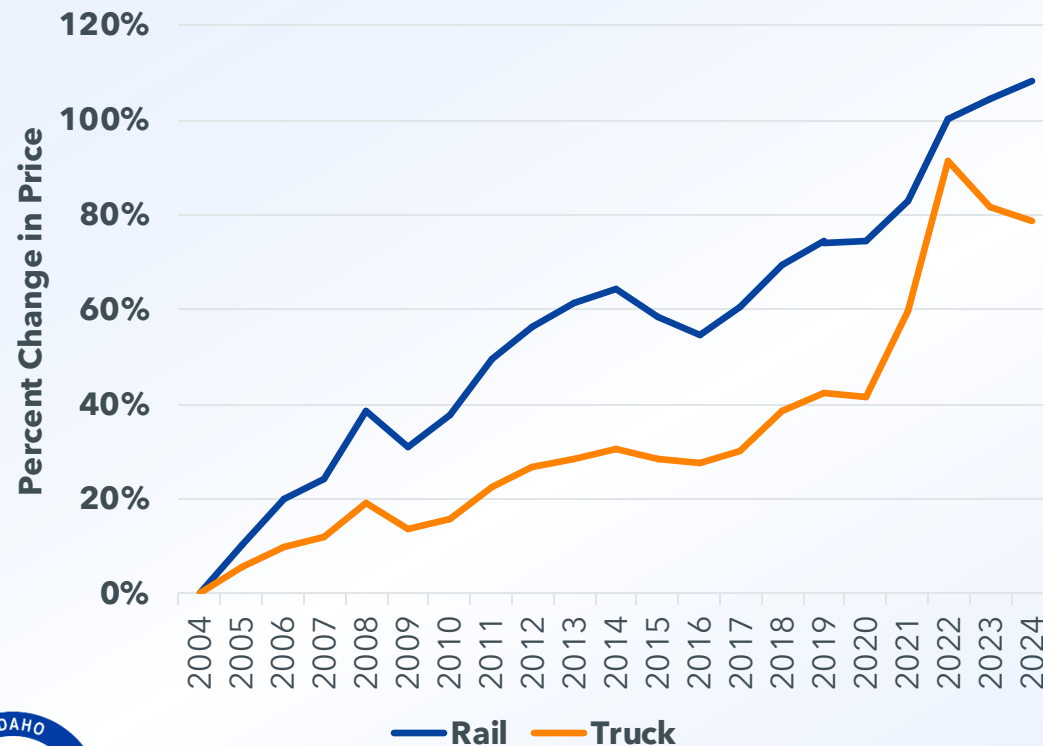
- Most freight passes through without stopping, offering limited benefits to Idaho
- Idaho relies heavily on trucking to deliver goods



Source: Surface Transportation Board Confidential Carload Waybill Sample (2010, 2015, and 2021)

Modal Competition

Percent Change in Price: Rail vs. Truck



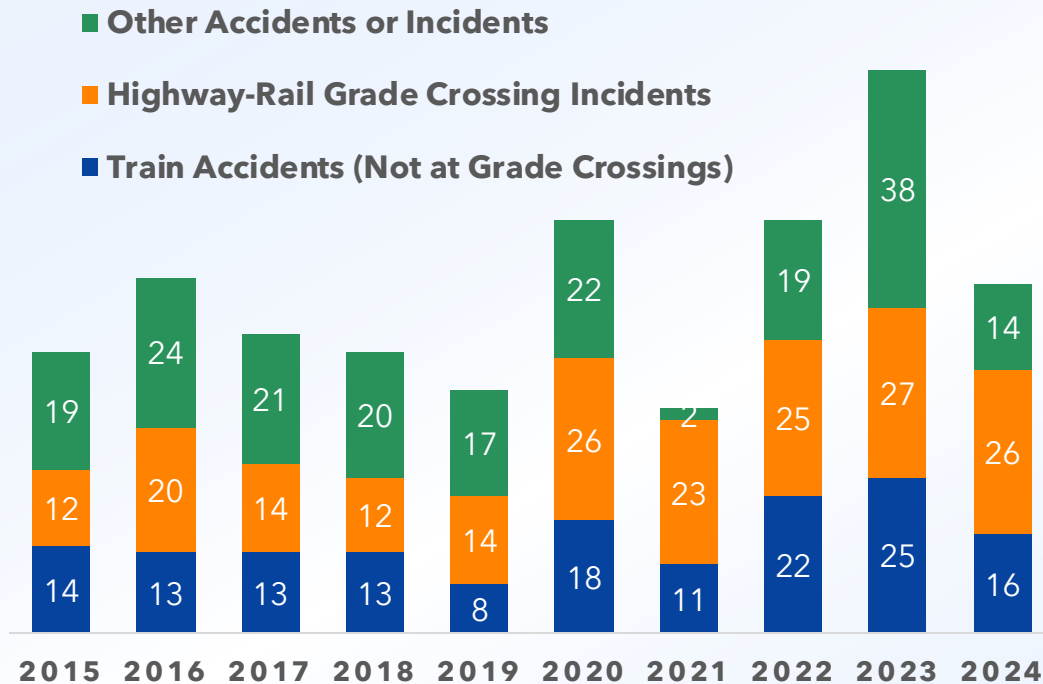
- Rail transport is increasing in price compared to truck transport



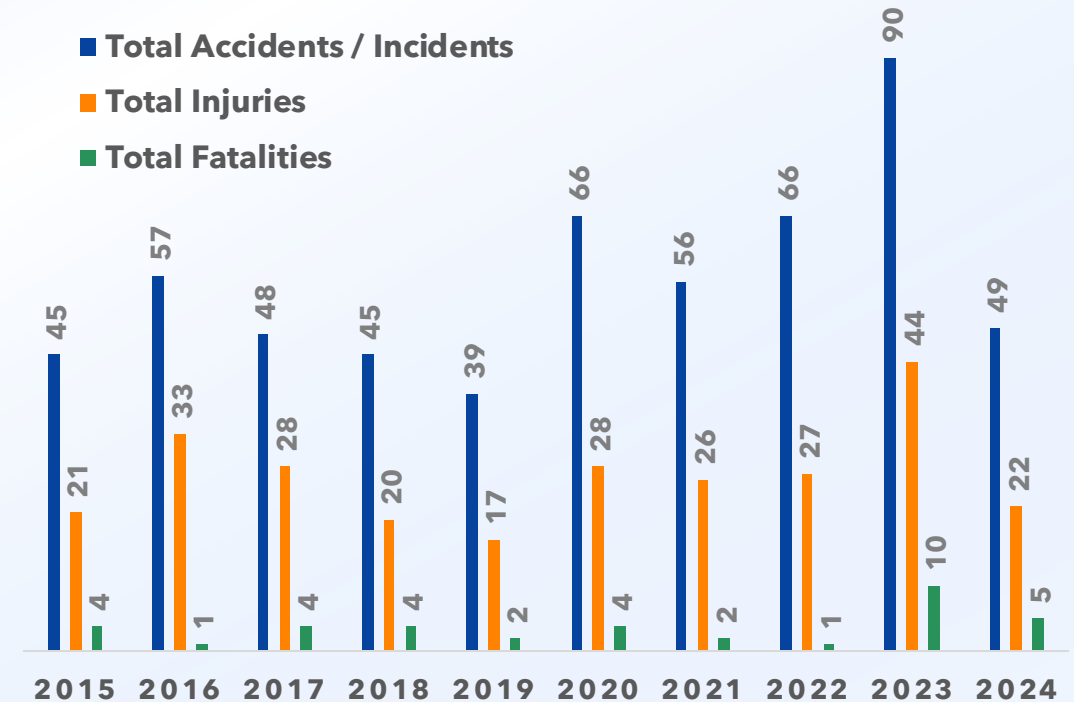
Source: Surface Transportation Board Confidential Carload Waybill Sample (2010, 2015, and 2021)

Rail Safety Incidents are Rising

Idaho Rail Incidents



Idaho At-Grade Crossing Incidents



Source: FRA 2025 Accident/Incident Overview Dashboard

Competitive Freight & Rail Labor Market

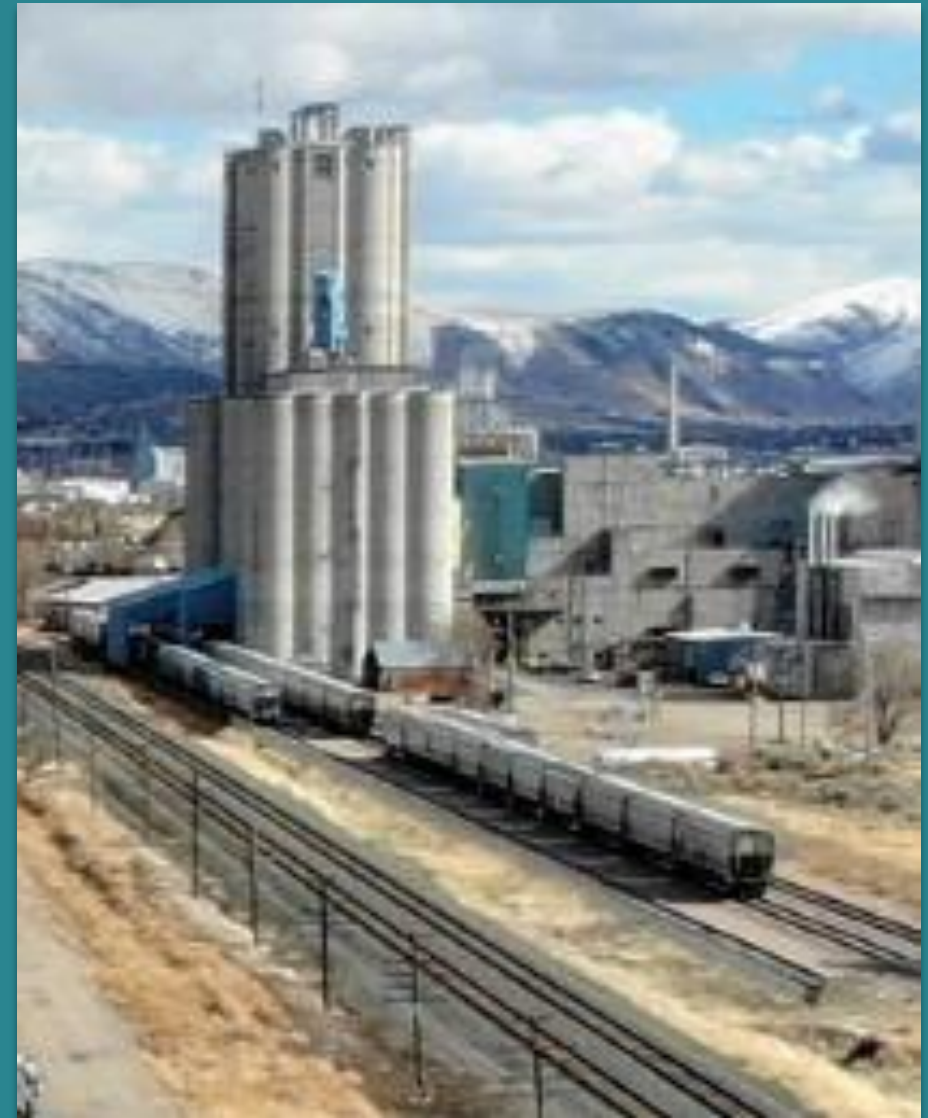
- Demand for employment across freight-generating industries remains strong.
- However, there is strong competition for labor in these industries, in both urban and rural regions
 - » Food Production
 - » Agriculture
 - » Tech / Advanced Manufacturing
 - » Aerospace



Micron's chip facility under construction in east Boise.
Source: Idaho Business Review

Limited Rail-Served Sites and Facilities

- Savage Railport Intermodal Terminal is only rail container terminal in Idaho
- 8 rail/truck transload facilities throughout the state, including waterway connection at Port of Lewiston
- Especially in urbanized and rapidly-growing regions of the state, rail-served sites are limited



Savage Intermodal Facility in Pocatello, Idaho

Source: Savageco.com

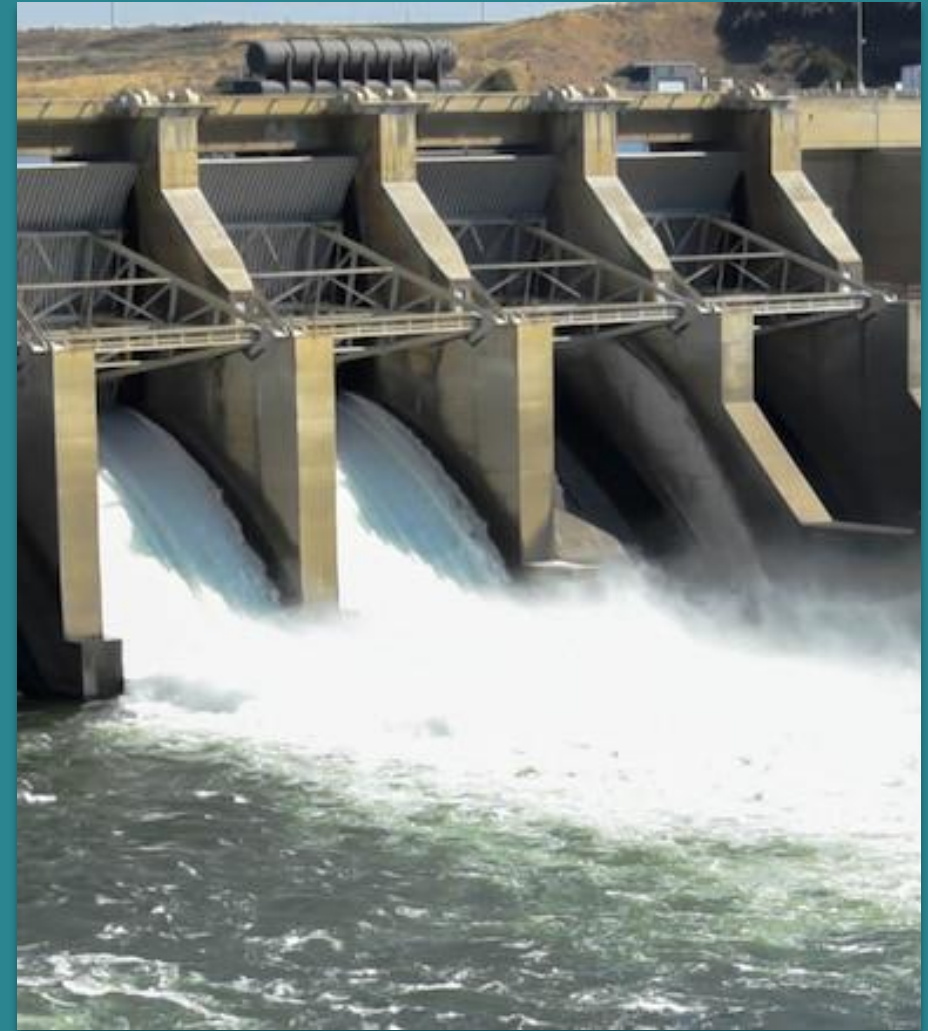
Impacts of Tariffs

- Tariffs impact key Idaho commodities, including grains, other agricultural commodities, manufacturing equipment, and construction materials
- Many Idaho commodities are shipped internationally
- Tariffs are affecting the demand for exported Idaho goods



Regulatory Actions and Policies

- Potential changes in federal regulations and policies could affect rail in Idaho, including:
- Increased train lengths could increase efficiency
- Increased truck length and overall weight could increase efficiency
- Snake River dam breaching could increase truck traffic and congestion on highway network without an investment in rail
- International trade affected by tariff policies



Ice Harbor Dam along the Snake River in Eastern Washington. Lawmakers in Washington have considered breaching the dam which could impact agriculture in Idaho.

Source: Wikipedia

Next Steps



Next Steps

- Public invited to take the [online survey](#) through Nov. 12
- Final plan to be released in spring 2026
- More information available at itd.idaho.gov/planning
- Questions? Contact Freight Program Manager Caleb Forrey at Caleb.Forrey@itd.idaho.gov

