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Bridge over the Road to Nowhere

There has been a lot of curiosity and some discussion over the big pile of dirt at the west end of the new Vineyard neighborhood on the north of town called “Utah City.” It is now obvious that it is being used to build an overpass over the newly built extension of the Vineyard Connector (the extension portion currently known by many as “the road to nowhere”).

There has been much concern over how much that overpass is costing the city and the RDA. Why put an overpass there? Why not just make an intersection and save the time and expense. Good questions. As I have been attending City Council and Planning Commission meetings regularly for some 9 years now, may I offer an eyewitness account about how we got here and hopefully provide some answers to those questions?

When plans for the Vineyard Connector extension were first discussed in Planning Commission meetings some four, five, six years ago, it was a Utah (state, not county) Department of Transportation (UDOT) representative that presented the plan. It turns

out the Connector is a 'numbered' state highway and UDOT controls where it will go and how and where it will be accessed, how fast you can go on it, etc. But it is also paid for entirely with UDOT money. As far as I know, it has been listed among their top priorities for several years, a priority established with the assistance of the Mountainland Association of Governments (MAG, a quasi- governmental agency composed of the mayors from all the cities in the region). I cannot vouch for the process that was used to get MAG approval and prioritization, but it is my understanding that road has it and proof of that is on their current list of highway projects (see MAG's TransPlan50 Highway map at <https://magutah.gov/files/transportation/TransPlan50/HighwayMapsandProjectList2025.pdf> Note also Project numbers H12, H20, H37, H44 on succeeding pages).

That established, UDOT did not want all of the intersections Vineyard had planned for that road. They envisioned something more like Pioneer Crossing from American Fork to Saratoga Springs (and when finished, the Connector will also go all the way through to Saratoga Springs.) They explained to the Planning Commission and later, the City Council where they would allow an intersection--and this is the part that is most germane to this discussion--they would provide funding for an overpass in place of the Promenade-to-Vineyard Connector intersection the city had as one of their main connections on their 'Downtown Vineyard' plans and General Plan. It was to be a basic overpass, but the Planning Commission and later the City Council voted to add city (RDA) money to the project to widen the overpass to include a walkway, bicycle lanes, buffers between pedestrian lanes and automobile lanes, etc. I am not sure how much of all that ended up on the final plans approved by the city council (in their role as RDA board), but some did.

This is to be the main connection from the south portion of the Vineyard district currently known as "Utah City" to the Utah Lake waterfront. This was to be part of the Promenade, the showcase of the development, with clear views of the lake from the train station and from any point along the route. Of course, much of that changed when Flagborough brought in Jeff Speck to redesign their newly re-christened "Utah City" neighborhood. But, as far as I know, the overpass remained part of the plan, even if the Promenade concept morphed substantially in the process.

So, the basic overpass is paid for by UDOT. The city (RDA) is paying for upgrades. The overpass was baked into the Vineyard Connector extension project plan almost from the start. It's nice to see it finally being built. I look forward to the time when the Vineyard Connector extension is more than just a road to nowhere. I hope this helps provide some perspective. It is not the city spending tons of money to create that overpass. Although it all comes out of our pockets somehow, this time it is the state that is in control of the situation. 😊