

JEERS to Senate Majority Leader Bart Davis, R-Idaho Falls, and Rep. Frank Henderson, R-Post Falls. They didn't create an emerging bottleneck on U.S. Highway 95 north of Coeur d'Alene. But between them, these two legislators didn't help matters much either.

The problem dates back to the original "Connecting Idaho" legislation, which designates transportation bond dollars be allocated for major projects. Among them is expanding U.S. 95 to four lanes from Garwood to Sagle.

The Idaho Transportation Board and Idaho lawmakers neglected a 2.5-mile stretch at the southern end of the project. That means four lanes of traffic will congest into two lanes and then back into four. The state owns the right of way. It has money to fix the problem. But because it's written in state law, the transportation board can't fix the bottleneck administratively, Idaho Attorney General Lawrence Wasden's office says.

So Henderson sought to remedy it. His bill easily cleared the House. In the Senate, it was amended to include other northern Idaho projects.

That's when Davis stepped in. He wants the state to improve the highway linking Idaho Falls to the Idaho National Laboratory. That's how pork barrel highway budgeting works. But when the amended bill got back to the House, Henderson refused to concur, effectively killing it.

Davis says he tried to secure another bill containing only Henderson's language, but it died in the last-minute machinations of the session.

That's what happens when politicians start dividing up highway dollars. Remember when professional highway engineers, designed Idaho's road projects? Whatever happened to those days?