

Public Meeting Notes

SUBJECT: Fireweed Lane Reconstruction Open House Public Meeting
GROUP: General Public
DATE: November 10, 2005
TIME: 6:30 – 8:30 pm
LOCATION: Romig Middle School, Multi-purpose Room, 2500 Minnesota Drive,
Anchorage Alaska

MEETING OUTREACH:

Postcards (2872 total), Newspaper ads (published November 3 and November 10), Public Service Announcements (sent to 24 stations)

MEETING ATTENDANCE: 54 individuals signed the sign-in sheets

MEETING MATERIALS:

- 1) Handouts
- 2) Background Posters
- 3) Large corridor plotted on aerial photos at each station
- 4) Plot of bicycle and pedestrian crashes at each table

STAFF PRESENT:

Anne Brooks, Public Involvement Coordinator, Brooks & Associates
Kathy Burgess, Brooks & Associates
Jacqueline Summers, Brooks & Associates
Jim Sawhill, Lounsbury & Associates
Dave Krehmeier, Lounsbury & Associates
Patrick Hoffman, Lounsbury & Associates
Scott Pulice, Lounsbury & Associates
John Smith, Municipality of Anchorage Project Management & Engineering (MOA PM&E)
Rand Gaynor, MOA PM&E
Luanne Urfer, Tryck Nyman Hayes
Oona Martin, Tryck Nyman Hayes
Bert Lent, Tryck Nyman Hayes
Michael Travis, Travis Peterson Environmental Consulting Inc.

MEETING INFORMATION:

Project staff greeted attendees at the entrance, and asked them to sign in. They were given handouts and a brief orientation about room layout and meeting format. They were then able to visit the various areas of the room at their own pace.

Background information was printed on large posters at the edge of the room, and large tables were placed around the room with aerial photos of the project corridor. There were stations focusing on Intersection Safety, Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety, Parking and Transit Facilities, Neighborhood, Street and Sidewalk improvements, and Environment. Knowledgeable project team members were available to discuss issues or answer questions staffed each station. Participants were encouraged to write comments directly on the

drawings on the table, especially if they were location-specific. These comments have been transcribed from the drawings as follows:

Seward Highway Intersection

- Increase capacity
- Improve current & future traffic flow eastbound from C Street to Seward Highway at or during rush hours not reduce traffic by reducing number of lanes signed by J. Bablon, 885 Fireweed Lane
- Better signage in this area
- Need left turn lanes (2) from Fireweed to Seward

Denali Street Intersection

- Why green arrow and not just green light?

Fairbanks Street Intersection

- Business on N side of Fireweed (Audio) losing parking and access at front

Gambell Street Intersection

- Peak hours can't get on or off Fireweed
- High crash rate

Eagle Street Intersection

- Snow storage in front of dry cleaners cuts visibility
- Snow storage by Asian restaurant on SE corner cuts visibility
- Snow mounds on SW corner (Asian grocer)
- NE side parking cuts visibility to enter roadway

Barrow Street Intersection

- SE corner snow mounds on corners
- NE of Barrow St existing landscaping interferes with sight distance (next door to Frontier Chiropractic)

A Street Intersection

- Speeding in northbound direction
- Additional turn pockets at identified (per traffic study) intersections
- Left turns onto side streets need to be permitted
- NW corner accident damage (arrow to signage in front of building)
- Poor access to building on NW corner

Section Between A & C

- Median is restrictive to customers
- Break in median needed for alleyway behind Cash Alaska

C Street Intersection

- Intersection is dangerous
- Need Right turn lane onto C southbound

Eide Street Intersection

- Parking and backing into street problems at SE corner business

Arctic Intersection

- NE corner pocket park, improve visibility
- Add left turn arrows to signals
- Use turn signals without channelization
- Check signal timing
- Arctic Southbound—people maneuver around southbound left lane—add dedicated L turn lane
- Signal phasing contributes to accidents
- Need more S-bound yellow time
- Southbound traffic—it's icy and people go fast
- Consider pedestrian overpass for school crossing

Blueberry Intersection

- Need right turn lane onto Fireweed
- Remove right of way for street (name?) in back of Neeser property @ Fireweed & Blueberry
- Circle around parking on Blueberry in front of Steller. Remove parking for additional lane
- Shrubs at Steller on NE corner—remove for sight distance
- Need turn lane R onto Fireweed

Spenard Intersection

- S & E bound traffic—slow traffic down
- NE corner consider alignment west to create parking for the building on that corner
- Medical offices—1 parking space is required for every 250 sq ft

Blueberry to Barrow Section

- Need lighting

Spenard to Blueberry Section

- Good lighting for Pedestrians & vehicle traffic
- Add landscaping
- Get power lines below ground
- Need lighting
- Lower speed limit to 25 or 30
- Businesses are important

North Star Elementary to Arctic Section

- Sidewalk with landscaping not hardscape, no cutesy stuff

North Star Elementary School

- Sight distance at eastern entrance

- G Court sight distance

Dorbrandt Street Intersection

- West side of United Way building—were new evergreens planted in ROW? Concern to business owners at NE corner of Fireweed & Spenard because their employees park there.

Spenard to C Section

- There is lighter traffic, heavier pedestrian use, & should promote multi-use (bikes, traffic & people)

C to Seward Section

- Heavier traffic, apply higher capacity road design—4 lanes

Oona Martin of Tryck Nyman Hayes made the following notes from conversations she had with individuals and groups:

MOA Planner who was interested to see what mechanisms will be put in place to establish the Fireweed area as a neighborhood district. He sees similarities to what the city did with Mountain View, i.e., challenges, experiences.

Resident in nearby Valley of the Moon, on Blueberry -wants to see a design that is "pedestrian friendly"; reduces speed, safer

- Recognizes that businesses have challenges for their customers; turning on/off road.
- Thinks that the safety issues that many of the business have now is bad for their business.
- He wants to see a visually attractive thoroughfare.
- Thinks that the area near the schools and by the cleaners by Arctic Blvd has a lot of potential and needs to be better addressed for pedestrian safety.
- Question: Are the utilities going to be put underground as part of this project?

Resident in nearby Valley of the Moon, on Blueberry

- Bikes and walks to work, -feels that much of Fireweed is dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists; dark and uninviting, -feels that if pedestrian safety was improved more people from the neighborhood would feel more comfortable to walk to the businesses. Now they have to drive to many of the businesses, and if they are going to get into their car anyway and drive, then they might as well go to another part of town.
- Question: What is a "standard" sidewalk width?
- Wants to see a design that makes pedestrian use safer - separate the sidewalk from the roadway, make it more inviting for pedestrians
- Snow removal/maintenance seems to be particularly bad on Fireweed
- Fireweed has character - envisions that this character be taken into consideration alongside the Anchorage 2020 plan, Long Range Transportation Plan and the Title 21 rewrite.
- Tracy and her husband observe that Fireweed can be divided into two predominant uses. From C street east to the Seward Hwy, the traffic appears to be heavier. From C street

west to Spenard, the traffic appears to be lighter. Can the design reflect this kind of capacity change? I.e. 4 lanes east of C street and 3 lanes west of C street?

- Where does the traffic get lighter?

Residents in Valley of the Moon, on 19th near Spenard/Hillcrest Ramp.

- Question: Are utilities going to be put underground as part of this project? Is the three-lane option the only option?
- Under grounding of utilities are a priority for them
- Uniform road design - unlike 15th where lanes appear and disappear.
- Pedestrian lighting? - I think the question was whether or not it "Is it necessary?"
- When designing character elements, prioritize simplicity - be unlike 15th, A and C street sculptures, Transit colors.
- Think about maintenance
- Turnagain is a good example of attractive landscaping and road design.

Other General Issues

- Transit is important but there are misconceptions about how buses occupy the road. For example, people think that buses are part of the traffic problem rather than a necessary service that is encountered once or twice an hour.
- Snow removal/storage procedures are unclear. Who is responsible now?
- What kind of maintenance plan should be considered? Is this something that the city should set up?
- Pedestrian safety - This is a priority for most people. Many attendees have had or witnessed poor or dangerous pedestrian experiences. Also, there is some doubt to how much Fireweed really needs pedestrian facilities - some are interested to know more about the pedestrian and bicycle counts/statistics.
- Intersection safety is a big concern - all users. some felt that cars are so busy trying to navigate the intersections that their attention was not focused on the crosswalks.
- If the 3rd lane is so contentious, show what happens when you put a median down the length of the project. Maybe then people will see that the middle lane isn't such a bad idea.
- Why can't the surrounding streets accommodate additional traffic so that Fireweed can be designed for a lower capacity?
- Can a road even be made safe for pedestrians with such a high capacity?
- What is the speed data? Are people respecting the speed limit now?
- What are the design criteria for a minor arterial?

Attachments (on file):

Postcard

Newspaper advertisement

Handouts (4 pages)

Sign-In sheets

Comment Sheets