



Meeting Notes

SUBJECT: **Spenard Road Reconstruction Project:**
Minnesota Drive to the Minnesota Drive On-Ramp

PROJECT NO.: MOA Project No. 03-21
ADOT&PF Project No. HRO-001(172)/53986

GROUP: Public

DATE: November 2, 2006

TIME: 7:00 – 9:00 pm
Presentation at 7:40 pm

LOCATION: Romig Middle School, Multipurpose Room

MEETING OUTREACH: Newsletter mailer to residents, businesses and property owners on and around the project corridor (4,000); Display advertising in the *Anchorage Daily News* (October 26 and November 1)

MEETING ATTENDANCE: 63 (from sign in sheets)

MEETING MATERIALS: *1) Handouts:* Agenda; Two Comment Sheets (General Comment and Landscaping Specific); Fact Sheets: Shared Parking, Spenard/Minnesota Couplet, Lane Reduction; Newsletter; Landscaping & Amenities; Announcement for Midtown District Plan 12/4/06 Open House (copies on-file);
2) Graphics: Two sets of design drawings showing the full corridor and couplet; landscaping and amenities (various options); traffic simulation on two screens; traffic volume and crash information;
3) Review Documents: CAG Notebook; Draft Preliminary Engineering Report;
4) PowerPoint Presentation

STAFF PRESENT: *ADOT& PF:* Judy Dougherty
MOA: John Smith; Rand Gaynor; Michael Johnson
Lounsbury & Associates: Jim Sawhill; Dave Krehmeier; Charles Winkler; Josh Cross; Patrick Hoffman
Travis Peterson Environmental Consultants: Noah Zogas
Tryck Nyman Hayes: Bert Lent; Randy Lyons
Brooks & Associates: Anne Brooks; Kathy Burgess; Betty Caudle; Jacqueline Summers

MEETING INFORMATION:

Folks were greeted at the door and asked to sign-in for the meeting. They were given an Agenda for the meeting and then directed to a table to their right (Public Involvement Station discussed below) for additional meeting handouts.

An Open House was held from 7:00-7:30 and 8:30-9:00 pm. For the Open House times, five different stations were set-up for the public to wander by, to look over the graphics and to talk to a project team member at the station. Below is a description of the stations.

- **Current Drawings** - consisted of design drawings showing the full length of the project corridor and the Spenard/Minnesota Couplet.
- **Traffic Simulations/Couplet** - consisted of two screens showing Traffic Simulation of the Spenard/Minnesota Couplet. One screen shows traffic simulation without the one-way couplet built and the other traffic simulation shows the traffic flow with the one-way couplet in operation.
- **Landscaping and Amenities** - showcased the various landscaping and amenities options available for the project. At this station the public were engaged in a discussion of what is available and what were their ideas for a gateway and landscaping theme to the Spenard Neighborhood.
- **Traffic/Crash Statistics** - showed the traffic volumes and crashes involving cars, pedestrians, or bicyclists along the project corridor.
- **Public Involvement/Documents** – contained the Public Involvement documents for the project. At this station the public could pick up additional copies of the newsletter that were mailed out; the fact sheets discussing the couplet, shared parking, and lane reduction; and comment sheets—both for general feedback and specifically for landscaping. Also available for their review was a copy of the handbook for the Citizens’ Advisory Group (CAG) and a copy of the draft Preliminary Engineering Report. Attendees could drop off their comment sheets at this station as well as record verbal comment. While no one chose to record their comments, several folks did provide written comments or left with comments sheets to mail in later.

At approximately 7:40, a PowerPoint Presentation was given by Jim Sawhill of Lounsbury & Associates about the project. The presentation provided background of the project, issues raised, possible solutions, as well as challenges and benefits of the project. Jim then asked if anyone had questions or comments about the presentation.

Below are the notes taken during the Question and Answer session as well as during the Open House sessions. Questions/comments from members of the public are in plain type; project team responses are in *italics*.

Notes from Question and Answer Session

- My street isn't 29th Avenue. It's now named Photo Avenue and your drawings should reflect that.
- What percentages of the Spenard crashes are in the Northern Lights-Benson segment of the road? *We can give you that information in about 10 minutes at the Traffic/Crash Statistics table.*

- I really would like to see bus pullouts. A bus stopped in the single travel lane will stop everyone on that side of the road. *We worked with People Mover in developing bus stops and they said no to pullouts. This is in keeping with the design of lower Spenard, which is a 3-lane high-usage transit corridor that does not use pullouts. Vehicles are not supposed to go around stopped buses on the left, but they do. We will continue working with People Mover as the road design proceeds.*
- I used to drive lower Spenard, but I don't now. People don't stay behind a stopped bus; they weave around. The people who drive on the road should have some say about this, not just public transit.
- I drive Spenard every day between my home and business and am concerned that the 3-lane design will hugely increase my wait at the Spenard/Benson intersection. *We are maintaining the same number of lanes at that intersection to maintain capacity there. Take a look at the drawings later and you'll see that there are more than 3 lanes near the intersections that need them.*
- How many and what kind of crashes are there on Spenard? *Not any one type dominates. We can best explain this at the traffic table later. We are trying to improve the rate of crashes that can be bettered by road design—such as left turns, rear ends, side swipes and crashes involving pedestrian and bicycles. We think we can achieve a 30% to 40% improvement in the mid-block collision rate.*
- Thanks for a great presentation. One of my concerns is the slipperiness of the Hillcrest hill, which gets no sun. I'm not sure what if anything can be done about that. A design similar to Spenard's was proposed for Fireweed and the project was shut down by the businesses. I live nearby and drive Fireweed and Spenard several times a day. How can we prevent a Fireweed type shutdown on Spenard? Do businesses' interests trump my family's interests and safety? *We are trying to build a road that serves all users. We don't want to create congestion that harms business, and we have a responsibility to improve the safety of the existing street. We're trying to balance all the needs and interests. The Fireweed project may be rescoped by the city. Please stay involved; that's the way to influence the outcome.*
- It's counter intuitive that 3 lanes can do as well as 4, but I'm not privy to the data. You've eliminated traffic going south on Spenard in the couplet. When does 1 lane become 2 on 36th? *There is one lane of traffic loading the 1 lane on 36th; there is no change.*
- When I go west on Northern Lights it is too difficult to turn left onto Spenard. I find I have to go through to Minnesota. Will anything be done about this intersection? *We looked at widening the road there, but it still wouldn't increase capacity enough and there was lots of expensive right of way impact. The city may need to open another north/south corridor in this area, perhaps put Cope Street through. Also, the Northern Lights Center may plan changes to its traffic pattern on the south that will help the situation.*
- The North Star Business Association (NSBA) is concerned with families and safety, too. The suggestions of the NSBA and of the Citizens' Advisory Group have been blown off. If

there is such a safety problem, why hasn't anything been done in the past 10 years? 1000 people signed the NSBA petition against the project. Pedestrian and bicycle traffic shouldn't outweigh vehicles.

- I'm in favor of the 3 lane design, and I like the couplet concept as I saw the idea refined. There are other efforts going on that the Spenard project should work with: the Business Improvement District, the Midtown Plan, and the Town Center plans. Spenard already has a town center—the district around the Bear's Tooth, REI, and Northern Lights. I suggest bringing the 3 other planning and development efforts into the project. There are other ideas to bring in and add to meld all 4 entities.
- I manage REI and I've worked with the landlords at the Northern Lights Center. The right turn only entrance would work well for REI. We know we are a main traffic generator for the district. Many people park near us and walk to other stores. 80 of our employees use alternative transport to and from work (biking or walking). Many of our customers arrive by alternative transport as well. This project was factored into REI's decision to stay in our current location. We need to make Spenard a desirable shopping destination for the sake of our businesses.
- My interest is the northern portion of the project. I represent the condominiums at the corner of Hillcrest and Spenard, 24 homes almost entirely owner occupied, so we are in the area for the long term. We are customers of the businesses on Spenard and we walk to them some of the time. We have West High School teachers who walk to work. I am excited about these improvements to our town center; it will encourage even more people to walk and spend money here. The 3 lane design will certainly work on the northern end of Spenard.
- I live on Chugach Way and work on Spenard. This plan will make me drive further to and from work. I am worried about adding trees and bushes when nobody trims them and they grow out and block the view for turning vehicles. *We will try to select appropriate plants for the landscaping. We have heard from the public that low maintenance landscaping is desired.*
- I have a business on the northern end of Spenard. Walking is hazardous there. No matter what you build, without maintenance you have nothing.
- There are at least 2 crashes a week turning left from Chugach Way onto Spenard. People cut corners. We need more space for bikes and walking. I think this plan will work.
- I've had a business for a very long time. We moved it to midtown because parking was better and the area was better set up for business. It's easy for customers to get discouraged. There's been a lot of loss on Arctic this summer. We're afraid on Fireweed that this idea will wreck our street. Snowplowing wrecks my landscaping. There needs to be better control of maintenance—no one is held responsible. There are other problems in the area—there were 9 break-ins on Fireweed last month. Business on Spenard will suffer during the construction period.

- I really believe that bus pullouts should be part of the design. What can we do to get them?
The best way to influence the project is to put what you have to say in writing so that it becomes part of the project record.

Notes from Open House Sessions

- Couplet area—many people don't understand the split phase problem that slows the intersection.
- Manager of the Holiday service station says he has attorneys ready to challenge the project. He fears loss of business (not clear whether from design or construction impact).
- Some believe that the opening of the C Street extension will relieve Minnesota & Spenard intersection and make the couplet unnecessary.
- Ray's Place restaurant owners have driveway and parking concerns. They think that the project will ultimately benefit the community and are interested in working with the team once we move into design.
- Owner of Second Chance says 2 lanes should continue southbound to 32nd Avenue because the curve diminishes visibility and vehicles entering from Side Street complicate matters. (he drew preferred change on the plot)
- Old wooden septic tanks under Cope Street area caused a sinkhole in woman's yard on Photo Street and would cause problems if Cope is put through. She has had sewage come up in her toilet from recent work on Arctic.
- The owner of the two lots south of 29th Place on the west side of Spenard Road wanted to know if the median to Benson Boulevard could be shorten since these two parcels have a common access.
- Several people made comments about further extending the two lanes south past 31st Avenue.
- Some had comments about making left turns across double yellow lines is illegal.
- Rene Haag was glad to see the two additional alternatives between Benson and Northern Lights.
- A few asked about how many accidents happen at 29th (Photo Ave).
- The owner at 27th and Spenard, Northeast corner, was concerned about drainage on his property. He wanted to know if the elevation of the roadway is going to change.
- There were several comments about the median between 25th and Fireweed and trucks making lefts onto Spenard Road.
- A comment from a resident that lives off of 23rd Avenue had questions about the median extending north from fireweed. She was in favor of the 3-lane concept.

- Residents along the Spenard Ramp (east side) are concerned that they won't have access to the trail if the barrier is too high. Suggested a break in the barrier at regular intervals to allow them to cross the street and access the trail.
- A man was concerned about access to his barber on 33rd. He said the City wouldn't allow a driveway onto 33rd, and the only access was from Spenard. He encouraged allowing access to the barber from 33rd.
- A couple who live on 25th were very concerned about left turn access onto Spenard from their street and thought that the raised/landscaped median at the Fireweed Intersection would block their sight distance of south bound traffic on Spenard. They liked the suggestion of the median being painted instead of raised.

Notes written on the Plans

Location of handwritten note on plans is underlined, with written comment in *italics* following.

- 30th Ave/29th Place just before Benson - on west side -- *Only access to this. Property only has one entrance. Can the median be reduced 10-feet?*
- At the end of the project corridor near Hillcrest Drive. Near 25th Ave, on the west side of Spenard -- *No raised median.*
- Near 25th, just before Fireweed/Spenard -- *No landscaping, trees on corner.*
- Also near 25th, on the Southeast corner of Fireweed/Spenard -- *No landscaping, shrubs on corner.*
- Spenard as it curves towards Hillcrest (Station 77+00 and 79+00) -- *Add break to barrier for access.*
- 19th Avenue onto Spenard (written next to pork chop on drawing) -- *need access (arrows going right and left).*
- 29th Avenue -- *correct map to show Photo Avenue.*
- 35th Ave at Spenard -- *Bus turnouts entire Length of Spenard.*
- 35th Ave at Spenard -- *on southwest corner – “bus turnout” drawn/written next to lot.*
- 33rd Ave (note written on east and west sides) -- *Pedestrian crossing at mid-block. Pedestrian operated.*
- Spenard (mark begins at Station 37+00 and goes south) -- *Bring merging lane down to straighter section with better visibility, or even further. (Arrow goes down past Station Marker 33 – almost to 32nd Avenue)*

Spenard landscaping themes suggested by attendees

- Historic Spenard Trail to Lake Hood
- Fun mellow “New Age”
- From the Sea to the Sky!
- Action Adventure
- Spenard or Bust

Comments related to landscaping

- Bus pullouts that are decorated and have covered seats for people!
- The bus pullouts should be designed to invite people to our beautiful part of town.
- Lots of lights, pedestrian friendly – fun, contemporary.
- Avoid a median island south of the intersection at Fireweed because it will interfere with turning movements.
- Bus pullouts were a question of concern. Many people felt with the 3-lane configuration the pullouts are necessary. They felt that the pullouts would make the road safer, so that people are not trying to pass the bus in the turning lane.
- The trail needs to be separated coming down the hill into Chester Creek. This becomes very icy during the winter months.
- People see the need for pedestrian amenities in the area around Northern Lights / Benson and Spenard. They feel that this should be considered a Town Center. Maybe the landscaping / pedestrian circulation should be a higher priority in this area.
- Landscape maintenance is an existing problem. People feel the landscaping should be designed for low maintenance, meaning possible irrigation, bio-weed barrier and things of that nature.
- There was a concern about the median at the intersection of Fireweed and Spenard. This person felt that it would make turning movements hard when turning onto 25th.

Related documents on file:

Sign in Sheets
Memorandum summarizing handwritten notes on display documents
Handouts (listed above)
Comment Sheets received (on file)
Meeting graphics
Presentation
Mailing List

Shared Documents:Groups:Associates:Documents:B&A Files: B&A Active Jobs:3907 Lounsbury:3907.15 Spenard Rd:3907.15 PI Docs:3907.15 Meetings:061102 Public Meeting: 061102 SpenardMtnngNotes_FINAL.doc