



**Citizens Advisory Group Meeting Notes**

**SUBJECT:** Spenard Road Reconstruction Citizens Advisory Group Meeting  
**GROUP:** Citizens Advisory Group  
**DATE:** January 17, 2006  
**TIME:** 11:00 am – 1:00 pm.  
**LOCATION:** United Way Building Conference Room, 1057 W Fireweed Lane

**MEETING OUTREACH:**

Invitation to member candidates; reminder telephone calls

**MEETING ATTENDANCE:** 26

**MEETING MATERIALS:** 1) Member Notebooks 2) Handouts 3) Aerial photo of Spenard Road

**CAG MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Tom Bichsel, Second Chance	Mike Mitchell, North Star CC
Charlene Brown, resident	Ed O’Neill, Brown Jug
Jim Fredrick, Habitat for Humanity	Barbara Smart, resident
Baxter Gambell, The Printer, NSBA	Marvin Ungerecht, resident
Rene Haag, Blaine’s	John Weddleton, Bosco’s
Mike Herzog, REI	Stan Wolff, Access Alaska
Marilynn Leland, PWSRCAC, resident	Matt Yeomann, Cook Inlet Housing Authority
Tom McGrath, Frigid North, Spenard CC	

**OBSERVERS:**

Mike Boots, NSBA; Larry Brandt, Continental Bakery; Mark Begich, Mayor of Anchorage, Michael Johnson, MOA

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Anne Brooks, Public Involvement Coordinator, Brooks & Associates  
Kathy Burgess, Brooks & Associates  
Jim Sawhill, Lounsbury & Associates  
Dave Krehmeier, Lounsbury & Associates  
John Smith, MOA PM&E  
Rand Gaynor, MOA PM&E  
Luanne Urfer, Tryck Nyman Hayes  
Mike Travis, Travis Peterson Environmental

**MEETING INFORMATION:**

Group members were greeted, given name tags, and directed to seats at the meeting table.

The meeting was facilitated by Anne Brooks, who introduced project team members present and asked group members for self-introductions. John Smith welcomed the group on behalf of the city, and Jim Sawhill on behalf of Lounsbury & Associates.

Dave Krehmeier and Mike Travis presented background information on the history of the project, the previous work done on the safety study, the environmental process, Preliminary Engineering Report description, and the draft Purpose and Need Statement.

Comment was requested from the group on additional elements to be considered for inclusion in the Purpose and Need:

- There is no pedestrian access north of Hillcrest
- Bicycles need to be accommodated. There is high bike use on Spenard, for students traveling to the schools, people taking their bikes on public transit, people accessing the Chester Creek area.
- Snow removal/hauling must be considered, as plowed snow forms pedestrian/disabled barriers
- Spenard should try some of the new snow strategies—melting it in place or disposal in storm drains, for example.
- Status of utilities north of Benson
- Acceptable Level of Service for all modes of transportation—vehicles, pedestrians, and bikes—should be a goal.
- Needs of business and pedestrians should be balanced.
- Pedestrian crossings should be better—signals that sense pedestrians and automatically activate for them, countdown pedestrian signals that give remaining crossing time.
- Is a 4-lane plan completely ruled out?
- Will the street accommodate future traffic volumes?
- Address high crash rate locations first.
- Some business owners are skeptical about the 3-lane plan.
- Need to look at traffic impact of events, such as ones at West High and effects on Hillcrest and Fireweed intersections.

Mayor Begich addressed the group, thanking members for their service. He reminded the group of development and business success that have followed other major road renovations in Anchorage, and encouraged them to be creative and innovative with northern Spenard. The Mayor discussed the introduction of winter cities elements as are recommended for downtown. The group should work to identify the purpose, needs and goals for the project. The goals will determine the right thing to do here. Overriding importance on Spenard Road is the safety for vehicles and for pedestrians, including the high use areas by visitors. The Mayor also noted that business owners make an investment in the community and enhancing the business accesses will increase growth and reinvestment in the community. He also mentioned that special events or activities in Spenard help define the community character.

After lunch, Anne facilitated a discussion of evaluation criteria to be used for weighing the design alternatives when they are developed. The following were put forward:

- Service level at bus stops
- Level of Service for non-motorized use
- Safety and mobility for bicycle travel. Are there counts of bike traffic?
- Ease of maintenance for snow plowing and removal.
- Low number of obstacles in pedestrian pathways (including stored snow).
- Ability to handle peak traffic times for specific generators, e.g. West High School in the afternoon, Bear Tooth and Chilkoot Charlie's at closing time.

- Ability to handle special events such as parades, street fairs. Forethought should be given to power sources available for special events.

Concerns were expressed about the 3-lane concept:

- The center turn lane would be used by some as a passing lane.
- Unsure how this plan would work on the curved part of the road.
- Comparison of south and north Spenard are not valid because the southern portion is wide enough to change lane arrangement easily. Northern Spenard has narrower right of way and could not easily be changed back if 3 lanes doesn't work.

Group members were each asked to make a closing comment:

- In the future there will doubtless be competition for residential development land in the Spenard area, and that development will be denser than, for instance, the trailer court. Will these potential impacts be taken into consideration?
- There are problems in the area of 32<sup>nd</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenues with offset streets and no pedestrian crossings.
- Parking, driveways, and beautification are all important concerns, but maintenance of plantings and bus stops/site amenities is also important.
- Access to businesses is important. Beautification is OK, but it is costly and often gets destroyed or used by inebriates.
- I'm concerned with what will happen at 36<sup>th</sup> & Spenard
- I like beautification, but not for the homeless. I'm for wide sidewalks and melting the snow.
- I can't lose any of my business' parking. I have only the minimum required spaces now.
- Something needs to be done to prevent wrong-way travel on the portion of the road north of Hillcrest. Locals do it, but the problem is especially bad in tourist season. There is high pedestrian use here and many crashes that are never reported to the police. Bikes, pedestrians, dog walkers, moose, skateboards, and razor scooters use this area. I'm also for beautification.
- Loitering is a problem, especially at bus stops on the benches. We are trying to figure out how to address it at my business.
- Perhaps there could be detection cameras at the intersections. I favor a 30 mph speed limit and under-grounding the utilities. No egress from 29<sup>th</sup> Place would be a good idea, and please tear down that DOT building at Benson & Spenard.
- Building a nicer place crowds out the not-so-nice people. Parking is a concern. I would like to see more small shops and we should keep the park at Benson. Lots of bikes on this road especially near Northern Lights and Benson.
- Development is coming from Benson south, bringing more traffic. We need to concentrate on the multi-use concept and the connection to the greenbelt. This is the heart of Midtown. The priority of evaluation criteria is as important as the content.
- Aesthetics is important. Nighttime pedestrian safety is important, and lighting is key for both pedestrians and cars. Winter cities design, including better snow maintenance is important. I also am aware that there are unreported crashes in the northern section, especially people running into the retaining wall and guardrail. Pedestrian and bike safety is an issue here.
- We need better safety for all types of traffic, including bikes. Cost of maintaining what is built is important.
- Spenard is a great place to further the town center concept. We've got all the elements—pedestrians, businesses, housing, transit.

- Bus pullouts would help prevent blocking the travel lanes of a 3-lane road. Good lighting is needed, and bus benches that don't allow anyone to lie down.
- Are you thinking of a roundabout at 36<sup>th</sup>? No.
- Long driveway cuts are a problem for pedestrians and the disabled. Accessibility is an issue here. Do narrower cuts provide more parking spaces? I like the snow melting ideas. I know that a 3 lane road has traffic capacity very close to that of a 4-lane.