



## Meeting Notes

**SUBJECT:** Spenard Road Reconstruction

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

**GROUP:** Citizens' Advisory Group (CAG)

**DATE:** May 16, 2006

**TIME:** 11 am – 1 pm

**LOCATION:** CIRI Building, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room,  
2525 C Street, Anchorage, AK

**MEETING OUTREACH:** Email notice week of May 1, and May 15.  
Postal mail notification week of May 1.

**MEETING ATTENDANCE:** 26

**MEETING MATERIALS:**

- 1) Additions to Member Notebooks
- 2) Evaluation Criteria Handout
- 3) Aerial photo of Spenard Road
- 4) PowerPoint presentation
- 5) Animated computer traffic models

**STAFF PRESENT:**

*ADOT&PF:* Judy Dougherty  
*MOA:* John Smith; Randy Gaynor  
*Lounsbury Associates:* Jim Sawhill; Dave Krehmeier;  
Patrick Hoffman  
*Travis Peterson Environmental Consultants:* Noah Zogas  
*Tryck Nyman Hayes:* Oona Martin  
*Brooks & Associates:* Anne Brooks; Kathy Burgess;  
Betty Caudle

**OBSERVERS:** Lynn Boots, North Star Business Association (NSBA); John Boyt, NSBA; Michael Johnson, MOA Mayor's Office

### MEETING INFORMATION:

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Group members were greeted, given name tags and lunches, 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 and observers for self-introductions.

Jim Sawhill began the meeting with a presentation of the basics of traffic engineering and road design.

[Questions/comments from participants given in plain type; project team responses in *italics*.]

- Left-turning vehicles will have a hard time turning into businesses, specifically at Spenard and Northern Lights. Will the project address this? *Design is not at the point yet of dealing with driveways and access, but we understand the concern and will be working on it in due course.*

David Krehmeier presented traffic study information and how it is being used in the road design.

- High school congestion isn't apparent in the traffic volume averages.
- Do the pedestrian counts consider the school pedestrian traffic? *That data is available to us.*
- What caused the traffic drop in the 1980's? *We don't know exactly, probably the drop in the economy at that time.*
- Vehicles exiting the REI parking lot often block the Northern Lights-Benson segment. *All of the alternatives currently being developed include a barrier to left turns there.*
- REI has in the past requested blocking off the Spenard parking lot entry because it would make the mall a better shopping district. The owner of the property did not agree.
- Will 29<sup>th</sup> continue to have access off Spenard? *A barrier is probably needed there, too.*
- Is the new C street extension factored into the traffic simulator's projection? *Yes. Citywide improvements have been factored in.*
- Something needs to be done in the 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue/Minnesota area, but the couplet isn't it. How about just changing one lane of northbound Spenard on the west side of the Minnesota intersection to an additional left turn lane? *This is outside the project, but we could study it. The real purpose of improvement in this area, though, is to relieve Minnesota congestion. This may mean some backups on Spenard, a more minor road, in order to improve flow on Minnesota, the major road. The couplet design eliminates the need for a left turn from Spenard south onto Minnesota at the traffic light, thereby allowing Minnesota more green time, which is the goal.*

Mike Travis spoke about the project's environmental document; Anne Brooks outlined the next steps in the project and upcoming tasks for the CAG and schedule for further summer meetings, and then opened general discussion on the presentation information.

- Just leave the road lanes the way they are now, since squeezing and expanding for intersections just creates design problems. Also, traffic figures don't reflect what can be observed from a business on the street.
- South Spenard works better in its current 3-lane configuration than it did with a 4-lane configuration.
- The center lane in the curve area around 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue might be used as a passing lane. At noon time this area is congested, and is difficult for pedestrians to cross.
- Do the model's traffic projections take into account potential growth from redevelopment on Spenard? Trailer courts, for instance, are likely to be replaced by denser housing. *Redevelopment is included in the AMATS model.*
- The 3-lane road is more pedestrian-friendly, which translates into increased business. I have seen this occur in other cities.

- Crashes happen because of poorly marked intersections and bad driveway locations. 3 lanes will hurt drive-by business, and a Northern Lights-Benson center barrier will hurt businesses on the east side when people can't make left turns to them. *A U-turn capability was evaluated, but there was not enough width. We might want to look at a north-south connection (Northern Lights to Benson) between Spenard and Arctic in the Northern Lights/Benson area that could serve a U-turn function.* The trucks parked on 29<sup>th</sup> might cause visibility problems with such a connection.
- Visibility of businesses increases with slower, calmer traffic as on a 3-lane road.
- South of Benson, especially the curve, would benefit from being 3 lanes, as many drivers ignore the roadway striping.
- Perhaps the reduction to 3 lanes should begin before 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- How would the Northern Lights-Benson segment traffic be affected by the closing of the REI driveway? *Most of the volume there is fed by that driveway, so an analysis could be done to see how a closure would affect the intersections. It might then be feasible that the segment could be 3 lanes, especially if the access to 29<sup>th</sup> is removed.*
- The sidewalk by REI is in the Spenard Road right of way.
- Spenard is a white-knuckle drive for me, though I use it a lot to get to the various businesses and restaurants. I feel safer when I drive the 3-lane southern portion, have more time to make decisions about where I'm going. I can see how 3 lanes would work for the northern portion as well.
- Facilitating the Northern Lights traffic to Minnesota could lessen the use of Spenard and eliminate the need for the couplet. *The couplet is one of several options that were considered to improve the Minnesota/Spenard intersection. Perhaps we need to show you how drastic some of those other options were in order to show how well the couplet works with the problem and how cost-effective it is. The others include 8-lanes on Minnesota and/or adding more lanes to Spenard. These would have huge costs for right of way acquisition. The state spent some time analyzing the problem and, based on their experience and knowledge, forwarded this least-cost recommendation for further analysis.*
- Stopped buses will block a 3-lane road or cause crashes for those trying to pass. *Transit doesn't use pullouts except in very high volume areas, as they create problems for buses trying to re-enter traffic. With buses on a 30-minute cycle, any holdup occurs just once every half hour. Also, there is no room in the right of way; space would have to be acquired from adjacent property owners.*
- Will there be a barrier for pedestrians and bikes at the on-ramp [north of Hillcrest]? *That will be considered in the alternatives development for the project.*
- Relocate the sign indicating lane reduction near Hillcrest to make this clear to drivers.
- Is landscaping included in the project plan? *Yes, we can start to identify opportunities between the curb and right of way edge once the curb line is established. Will property owners share in landscaping plans? Because of Federal funding for the project, landscaping is limited to the right of way. Other funding sources would have to be found for areas outside the right of way.*

- Is there any money to protect surrounding neighborhoods from cut-through traffic? Children who play there are at risk.
- Will the 3-lane road accommodate emergency service vehicles? *Emergency services like a 3-lane configuration because the center lane easily becomes an emergency lane.*
- Snow removal/storage from medians/barriers is a concern.
- Traffic counts were done outside the school year.
- 3-lane road will mean lower traffic counts, which will mean lower business property values and less tax income for the city.
- Will this project address shared parking? *It is not a part of this project, but we have some resource information about it for you. It would be up to businesses to pursue it separately from the road project.*
- Anything that can be done to improve pedestrian use will improve business for everyone.

Meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.

Related documents on file:

Agenda  
Sign-In Sheet  
Annotated aerial photos

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