

TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION

MINUTES OF MEETING

January 26, 2009 Page 1 of 5

CONVENE: 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Ralph Osgood, Councilmembers Neil McClanahan, Pete Kmet, Joan Cathey, and Karen Valenzuela.

Excused absence: Councilmembers Bruce Zeller, Judith Hoefling, and Ed Stanley.

Staff: City Administrator Doug Baker, City Attorney Karen Kirkpatrick, Public Works Director Jay Eaton, and Recording Secretary Valerie Gow.

Others: Perry Shea, Shea Carr Jewell, Erik Preston & John Perlic, Parametrix, and John Fedor, Citizen.

**TUMWATER
BOULEVARD
INTERCHANGE
JUSTIFICATION
REPORT – UPDATE:**

Director Eaton referred to the Tumwater Boulevard Interchange Justification Report (IJR), which has been underway for some time. The IJR is required for projects involving access to the interstate system. Completion of the IJR has been in conjunction with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), among other stakeholders.

Parametrix and Shea Carr Jewell are the two consultant firms assisting the City through the project. The goal of the project is to produce an IJR and a project alternative to submit to FHWA for its approval. At the end of that process, the City will be able to begin moving forward on engineering and design of the project.

Councilmember Kmet asked at some point after approval, whether the City will manage the project or whether it will be managed by WSDOT. Director Eaton said it's undetermined at this point. The IJR is fully funded by the City through the collection of SEPA mitigation fees for developments sending trips through the interchange. Currently, project construction is not funded. It's likely WSDOT will be involved in some oversight in the construction of the project, but much of it will be dependent on how the project is funded and moves forward. There is some flexibility where the City could manage the project. Director Eaton said he prefers WSDOT provide project oversight.

Perry Shea, Shea Carr Jewell, reported completion of the IJR can take multiple years to complete the stakeholder and study process and identify the preferred solution. The project area is located on Tumwater Boulevard, an area of the City that continues to experience rapid growth. Mr. Shea described recent and planned improvements within the area to include completed improvements to Tumwater Boulevard and the Littlerock Road

TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION

MINUTES OF MEETING

January 26, 2009 Page 2 of 5

Improvement Project, which is underway. The I-5 interchange is unable to accommodate current and future traffic growth with high morning commuter volumes and high evening peak traffic merging onto Tumwater Boulevard. The City is currently collecting traffic mitigation fees to help fund the IJR. The City is leading the study and design process to identify a preferred alternative.

WSDOT has not designated any improvement for the interchange to solve traffic congestion other than some funding allocated for some improvements to the northbound on-ramp. The project will add a short eastbound left turn pocket on Tumwater Boulevard as well as widen the on-ramp to a second lane. The project is currently under design.

Mr. Shea reviewed the group of stakeholders involved:

- City of Tumwater – Lead
- WSDOT – Olympic Region and Headquarters
- FHWA
- Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC)
- Port of Olympia
- Intercity Transit
- Thurston County
- Consultant Team

Mr. Shea displayed a graphic of the study area, which includes the 93rd Avenue interchange and the Capitol Boulevard/Trosper interchange.

Key elements of the study include regional and local traffic modeling, establishment of the design year of 2030, which is consistent with the City's transportation plan and Regional Transportation Plan, establishment of stakeholder committees, completion of reasonable alternatives, identification of the preferred alternative, preparation of the formal IJR, and preparation of the environmental documentation of the preferred alternative.

City Administrator Baker asked whether a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review is required. Mr. Shea said a NEPA process is required involving three environmental documents.

Mr. Shea reported that at the end of the process when the City receives its approved IJR and the NEPA document, the project will be ready for soliciting grant funding to construct the project.

The team was required to prepare a Traffic Analysis Assumptions Document, which contains all the underlying assumptions included within

TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION

MINUTES OF MEETING

January 26, 2009 Page 3 of 5

the study to provide a solid foundation on why the assumptions were used. The team completed traffic modeling and workshops as well as a design alternative workshop for the stakeholder team to review design alternatives. Traffic analysis was completed for all the alternatives. The team identified the preferred alternative as well as developing a scope and environmental process.

Three concurrent studies are underway involving the West Olympia Access Study, Lacey Transportation System Alternative and Evaluation Study, and the Tumwater Boulevard Interchange Justification Report. Mr. Shea shared information on the progress of the other two studies.

Mr. Shea reported the City is required to demonstrate its efforts to manage traffic congestion. He cited some of the projects underway or planned within the City's Capital Facilities Plan to build and improve the local system.

Mr. Shea reviewed some of the traffic modeling assumptions. He presented the three reasonable alternatives:

- Single Point Urban Interchange (SPUI) – example: Black Lake/US 101
- Partial Cloverleaf
- Roundabout Diamond Interchange

Mr. Shea described the characteristics of each alternative, cost of each alternative, and the criteria considered for each of the alternatives. Criteria included reviewing local and mainline traffic, freight traffic, land use impacts, right-of-way requirements, environmental impacts, emissions, and stormwater impacts. The team completed analysis on each of the different components. The stakeholders used the information to rate each of the alternatives. The roundabout was rated the highest. The SPUI was dismissed as the least favored alternative because of cost. The roundabout also offers some opportunities for project phasing. The partial cloverleaf doesn't provide phasing flexibility.

The interim build for the roundabout alternative is approximately \$8 million. The second phase involves widening the bridge. Phase 1 would functionally accommodate the City's needs. Mr. Shea described the interim build design involving two operational intersections, ramp widening with capacity improvements on both ramps without widening the bridge. The design would accommodate traffic to 2023. Roundabouts function effectively because of how they meter traffic.

TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION

MINUTES OF MEETING

January 26, 2009 Page 4 of 5

Councilmember Kmet asked whether it's possible to construct one roundabout at a time depending upon funding availability. Mr. Shea said it's possible but that each intersection has different needs. He described issues associated with roundabouts and traffic lights placed too close causing traffic queuing.

Councilmember Valenzuela suggested that not including both roundabouts would defeat the purpose and would create a bigger problem.

Mr. Shea identified the roundabout to construct if funding was limited and the project had to be phased in that aspect. Depending upon the design, additional lanes can be added easily.

Director Eaton added that he is discovering that as he works through the process with FHWA, the agency is not entirely favorable about the phasing approach and prefers to have the project completed to ensure the validity of the IJR. If the project is phased, the IJR will need to be assessed to ensure it's still valid for each project phase.

Mr. Shea displayed a video of the roundabout alternative based on traffic in 2024 and described how the improvements will affect traffic.

Discussion followed on how the roundabout will accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians. Mr. Shea said that factor is a design element that hasn't been addressed at this point. The interim build will need more analysis on how to accommodate bikes and pedestrians.

Councilmember Kmet asked whether additional purchase of right-of-way is required. Mr. Shea indicated that some retaining walls will be necessary but purchase of additional right-of-way would be minimal if it is required.

The Council discussed accessibility in making U-turns in the roundabouts versus limiting turns only after a vehicle travels through the entire system of roundabouts. Mr. Shea described why limiting turns in the first roundabout of the "dog bone" design is important for traffic flow. Councilmember Kmet suggested the issue of completing a turn within either roundabout should be examined further because of the number of complaints the City has received from the local hotels.

Councilmember Cathey asked whether visitors to the area have been considered in terms of accessibility to the area through the roundabouts. Mr. Shea referred to the Vail roundabout on Interstate 70 that is frequented by many tourists. To date, there have been no problems with visitors to the area because roundabouts slow traffic. He referred to how some other

TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION

MINUTES OF MEETING

January 26, 2009 Page 5 of 5

countries do not stripe or sign roundabouts. Typically, roundabouts in the US are striped. There is some change in the traditional yield to the right mindset that motorists have to relearn when entering a roundabout.

Councilmember Kmet asked whether the City has bonding capacity for the entire project. City Administrator said it's unlikely the City has the entire capacity to bond. Director Eaton said the proposal is included in phases to demonstrate how functional projects can be accomplished through phasing. The proposed project cost is based on today's dollars.

Mr. Shea reviewed the next steps:

- Completing the IJR Policy Point Documents (8 documents) – a draft document is anticipated to be completed by April 2009
- End of summer 2009 – Finding of Engineering and Operation Acceptability Review

The second path involves completion of modest preliminary design to support the environmental phase.

The scope of work identifies beginning work on some of the preliminary disciplines investigation reports, such as high groundwater and mounding, hydrology of stormwater, noise study, biological assessment for endangered species, and wetlands and ponds. After preliminary evaluation, the team will identify the level of documentation required. The team believes a more streamlined environmental review will be required. However, FHWA wants the team to complete the investigation reports first. The team will then prepare the environmental documentation and obtain WSDOT and FHWA approval by the end of 2009.

Mayor Osgood asked whether the Tyee Drive extension roundabout should be included within the study. Director Eaton advised against including the project because of the amount of documentation required; however, it's included in the analysis. The Tyee Drive project is a stand-alone project.

Director Eaton commented on the alternatives and the costs associated with the options. He provided some historical information on how the progression of the alternatives occurred.

ADJOURNMENT:

Councilmember Valenzuela moved, seconded by Councilmember Kmet, to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 p.m. Motion carried.

Prepared by: Valerie L. Gow, Recording Secretary/President
Puget Sound Meeting Services