



SPENARD ROAD Reconstruction

Hillcrest Drive to Benson Boulevard

MOA Project Number 03-22b

MEETING NOTES

SUBJECT:	Spenard Road Reconstruction
PROJECT NO.:	Municipality of Anchorage Number 03-22b
GROUP:	Public
DATE:	Monday, September 19, 2016
TIME:	6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
LOCATION:	Romig Middle School, Multipurpose Room, 2500 Minnesota Drive, Anchorage
MEETING OUTREACH:	See Table 2. Meeting Outreach
MEETING ATTENDANCE:	51 people signed in
MEETING MATERIALS:	Graphics showing 65% design, landscaping, right-of-way, fact sheet, comment sheet, sign-in sheet
ATTENDEES:	<i>Municipality of Anchorage:</i> John Smith, Jennifer Noffke, Jason Bockenstedt <i>Lounsbury & Associates Team:</i> <i>Lounsbury & Associates:</i> Jim Sawhill, Susan Acheson <i>Brooks & Associates:</i> Anne Brooks, Camden Yehle <i>Bettisworth North:</i> Mark Kimerer <i>Trawver Land Services:</i> Alan Trawver, Tim Trawver

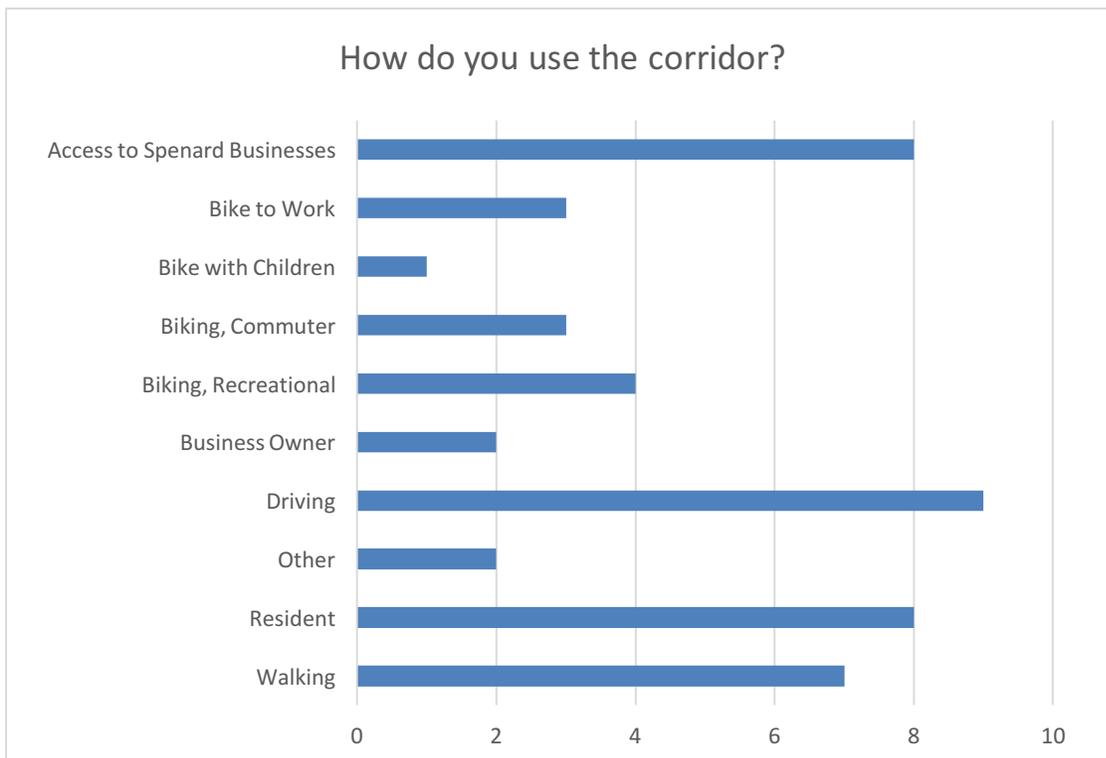
MEETING INFORMATION:

The format of the meeting was open house. Attendees were greeted at the door, asked to sign in, provided with a fact sheet and a comment sheet, and briefed on the meeting format.

The meeting included stations with information on design, landscaping, and right-of-way. Project team members were available at each station to discuss the project and answer questions.

COMMENT SHEET QUESTIONS/RESPONSES:

The meeting comment sheet asked questions of attendees related to how they used the corridor. Other questions asked attendees what they liked or disliked about the current design. The following graphic summarizes responses about corridor use submitted on written comment sheets.



Attendees submitted the following responses to the comment sheet question, **“What do you like about the 65% design?”**

- Great landscaping, love the pedestrian amenities. We don't walk this area currently but this new design looks inviting – I think it will increase pedestrian use a lot.
- Traffic calming, designing for pedestrians and biking, plantings, pockets of new parking.
- Bike lanes, additional crosswalks, divided traffic, turn lane.
- Nothing. (2)

- I like the pedestrian amenities. I like that you have not made it a place for the homeless to hang out.
- Overall, it's very good. Considers pedestrians, bikes, parking, landscaping, etc.
- Turn lane and most of the design.
- 1) The attempt to make maximum use of available space. 2) Attention given to a variety of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. 3) Incorporation of landscaping. 4) compliance with ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act]. 5) Many unifying design elements. 6) Public transit stops. 7) Improve separation of the pedestrian from vehicle traffic.
- The assurance from John Smith that the streets and sidewalks will be a priority for clearing and will be cleared in 24 hours of a major snowfall.
- Overall, seems good. I like that bikes have a place outside of regular traffic and the bus stop pull outs. In some ways I like the middle turning lane. Cleaning up some of the parking lot entrances so that people won't have to pull/back out right into traffic seems like a good idea, and also that you've bought land to give these businesses additional parking where possible is cool. The design is not filled with medians like many of the recent road "remodels" done lately, I like that.

Attendees submitted the following responses to the comment sheet question, **“What concerns do you have about the 65% design?”**

- Lack of signals/lights at the two new crosswalks on North Spenard, lack of transition from bike lane to bike trail on Spenard Hill.
- Making Spenard a 2-lane road from a 4-lane. Why make Spenard like Arctic? Traffic is a mess during rush hour.
- I am concerned about pedestrians running across the streets and jaywalking at night.
- Spenard Road will turn into Arctic Boulevard. This design is an impractical solution to this issue. Wintertime conditions turn Spenard into Arctic Boulevard right now. It's as if you are determined to spend this money and are forcing through this boondoggle. Spenard needs to move a lot of traffic in an orderly fashion. This plan does not accomplish this. What really needs to be done is address the drunks.

- We need the project broken into chunks and positive practical incentives for early completion and disincentives for a late completion. This was promised by the last three mayors.
- I think traffic will still be slow crossing Northern Lights in a.m. commute hours and turning east on Benson, also in a.m. and Saturday afternoons. Medians will solve the problem of some people turning into the bank or the bar parking lots (from other side) to get onto Benson, but the monster pickup trucks won't be deterred! Perhaps the lights would be time differently? I will take the sidewalks and landscaping over adding another lane, though. Landscaping: consider fruit trees – edible plants in some locations.
- Some of the landscaping planter boxes have been a problem downtown. I expect them to be an issue here. The columnar aspens could be replaced with columnar spruce at the bus stop. The lighting is designed with LED lighting – make sure the lumens are high enough at ground level to make them effective. They weren't originally on West Northern Lights and the street was dark. Had to upgrade it at cost. I would suggest at least 750 lumens or better at ground level.
- Not many to speak of. One concern that always affects projects like this is that hopefully, when the job is bid, sufficient funds will exist to allow incorporation of all the design's various elements. For this purpose MOA may wish to ask bidders for either additive or deductive "alternatives" in the bid package.
- The comment from Anne Brooks that the snow on the sidewalk "will take care of itself."
- I suspect that the city will not clear Spenard sidewalks like they do downtown but if they are committed --> GREAT! If no snow maintenance plan is in place as part of this design then the design is worthless to pedestrians. It appears that snow clearing on roads will be much more expensive and time-consuming with this design. :-(
- The median at the Fireweed/Spenard intersection seems like it will be in an awkward place for left hand turning southbound traffic coming off of Fireweed. The left hand turn is a little funky because of how Spenard is not coming straight at that intersection from the south (if this is making sense). So putting a median to drive around will make it worse/weirder. In general medians seem like a pain in the ass on other main roads they've been added to. I would be happy to see

none added to Spenard. I am a concerned about reducing traffic from 2 lanes to 1 in each direction. The middle turn lane will alleviate the slowdown from left hand turners, and the bus pull outs will helps keep traffic flowing as well, but right hand turners will slow everyone down, and at times of heavier traffic, this might lead to congestion as there are many places to turn off of that road. I understand that middle separate left turn lanes help keep traffic flowing, but common sense says that reducing the number of lanes will make traffic worse/heavier.

- I did not get to look at the landscaping very well, what I did see was choke cherry trees. These trees are not native, poisonous to moose, and are becoming invasive. We have tons of beautiful plants that are native to Alaska that you could use.

Comments written on the project graphics are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Comments Written On Meeting Graphics

Location	Landscaping Comment	Design Comment
30th to Benson		
Benson to Northern Lights	Plant Fastigate Spruce along REI parking lot. Include crab apple trees in the plantings at Photo Avenue.	
Northern Lights to 27th Avenue		
27th Avenue to Fireweed Lane	Plant Fastigate Spruce along Koots parking lot.	
Fireweed Lane to Hillcrest Street	Plant Fastigate Spruce at transit stop near Bosco's. Include crab apple trees in a wider planting bed at Bosco's.	Make the on-street bus stop in front of the proposed bakery parking a pull off. Consider a different curb ramp configuration on the northwest corner of Spenard Road and Fireweed Lane.

VERBAL COMMENTS RECORDED BY TEAM MEMBERS:

- Consider having the northbound lane at the intersection of Spenard and Hillcrest be 'sharrows' so bikes can safely cross from the northbound bike lane on Spenard to the multi-use trail on the west side of Spenard north of Hillcrest.
- Use crab apples where feasible.
- Include more evergreen trees.

EMAIL AND TELEPHONE COMMENTS:

The following email and phone comments were submitted between 9/6/2016 and 9/23/2016 in response to meeting outreach.

Hi Ms. Brooks, I have comment for the Spenard Rd. Reconstruction project. I was looking at the plans for the landscaping and noticed that you might be including some plants that are known to be invasive in Alaska. Meaning that they tend to disrupt natural vegetation. One is the rugosa rose and the other is the prunus maackii.

ADN has reported that chokecherries have shown to be toxic to moose. They are unable to process the cyanide that is created during digestion because they do not have as acidic of stomachs as humans. It would be great if you all would consider using different plants in place of these. The University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service in Anchorage may be able to offer alternatives to these plants and confirm whether they are invasive or not. They can be reached at 907-786-6300. Have a great day,

Team response: Thanks for the information [redacted]. I've copied our project team so your comments can be addressed as we continue our work. Anne Brooks, P.E., Public Involvement Specialist

Wow, \$26,000,000 a mile....

1). What "Brainiac" could possibly think it was a great idea to mix bicycles and motorized vehicles ... truly a brilliant idea. Certainly improved safety for everyone (especially since bicyclists in dedicated bicycle lanes immediately go brain dead, and ride without regard for traffic or traffic laws).

2). Anyone been to Chicago or Minneapolis lately? They have replaced their traffic islands with rumble strips. No doubt their concern over Emergency Vehicle Access,

traffic flow, destruction of sweeping and plowing equipment, and the greatly increased maintenance costs of the multi leveled surfaces caused them to actually come up with a cost efficient, practical solution.

Unfortunately, there is no Independent 3rd party cost / benefit analysis for transportation projects. It just costs what it costs, after everyone adds everything they can possibly think of including.

So, Bit by Bit, Tens of Millions by Tens of Millions, we have successfully strangled traffic flow across Anchorage. We have increased our maintenance costs to the point that we can't even afford what we have designed and built.....

\$26,000,000/ mile Bravo!

Team response: [Redacted] — thanks for your comments. I'll share with the project team. Regarding the proposed road design, there is a nationwide movement towards complete streets that is beginning to catch on in Anchorage. More information can be found here: <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/completestreets>. Once complete, Spenard Road will be Anchorage's 1st complete street. Anne Brooks, P.E., Public Involvement Specialist

Follow up email: Hi Anne, Thank you, I understand the complete streets "movement". Drive through Palo Alto CA sometime ... Complete disaster

The idea/ concept is deeply flawed, mixing pedestrian and vehicle traffic. The root cause are selfish bicyclists that lack the common sense and or good manners to share the sidewalk or roadway with anyone else.

Everyone is confused: build roadways or build Parks / Pedestrian ways, but mixing them is a lose / lose proposition costing obscene tax dollars for everyone, let alone safety risk.

Look at the weather we have: dark, rain & drizzle, rutted roads (because we can't afford to maintain the roadway) that cause hydroplaning or worse yet freeze over. Dodging the traffic islands at intersections because you can't see them see them (no paint, plows have chipped out the leading edges and transitions, never lit), bicyclists riding through or kitty cornered across intersections, angry at motorist because they know they own the road and can do any unpredictable thing their heart desires, without repercussion.

Until Bicycles pay their fair share of road construction cost, and are required to carry liability insurance for any accident they cause or are involved in, they need to remain

separated from motorized vehicles with pedestrians. Empowering them with a "Bicycle Lane" is pure lunacy, and unfair to motorists.

Anne, Thanks for passing this on. I know it won't change anything..... But 10 years from now when thousands of bicyclists have been accidentally killed on the roadways of Anchorage, and they are looking for safety solutions, I just might be seen as a "Visionary".

I received a call this morning from [redacted]. He had received our postcard about the meeting on the 19th of September and wanted to provide the following comments.

- 1) On the south side of REI at the northwest corner of the intersection a "one way" sign blocks handicap access to the pedestrian push button.
- 2) At the same location, northwest corner of Spenard and Benson Boulevard, he wondered if the "insurance Max" building could be cut on a diagonal provide better sight distance. He is aware of many crashes at this location and believes this would improve the sight distance.
- 3) He understands that 27th Avenue will be realigned to provide a 4-way intersection. He is concerned that the increased traffic on 27th will cause problems. He suggested that we prohibit parking on one side of 27th Avenue to accommodate two-way traffic on the street. He said that because of the Castle Apartments, people park on both sides of the street and it causes problems with traffic flow.
- 4) He believes the section of Spenard between 29th Avenue and McRae needs to be upgraded, especially the sidewalks. He believes they should be patched or fixed.
- 5) He suggested that the project block access to 29th Avenue near Cash Alaska. He believes that people can access the businesses from Benson Boulevard and that this access is unnecessary and unsafe because people turn left when traveling southbound causing problems. I explained that the project would be installing a raised median prohibiting this movement once the project is complete. He still believed the 29th access should be closed. He also said that the access should be reviewed between 29th Avenue and McRae.

I vote no . . . but thanks for sending it . . . [Referring to a project email with the subject line “Spenard Road Reconstruction – Design Available for Review”]

We received a couple of calls requesting the contact information of the right-of-way appraiser, which was provided.

Table 2. Meeting Outreach

Date	Outreach method	Description
8/16/2016 9/6/2016 9/19/2016	Email notifications	Provide email invitation to project stakeholders including elected officials
8/17/2016 9/7/2016	Federation of Community Councils notification	Email notification to constituents
8/30/2016	Project website	Meeting notice posted on the project website
8/31/2016	Postcard	Postcard invitations mailed to all local residents
8/31/2016	<i>Alaska Dispatch News</i> online calendar event	Inviting the public to the open house
9/6/2016	65% design posted to website	Email notification sent providing notice the 65% design was available for review
9/12/2016	Display advertising in <i>Alaska Dispatch News</i>	Advertisement inviting people to the meeting

Related documents on file:

- Sign-in sheet
- Comment sheet
- Fact sheet
- Project graphics