



Meeting Notes

SUBJECT: Parks Highway, MP 44-52
PROJECT NO.: IM-04-1(23)/57178
GROUP: Meadow Lakes
Special Land Use District Planning Team
DATE: December 19, 2006
TIME: 7:00 PM
LOCATION: Meadow Lakes Elementary School
MEETING OUTREACH: By the Mat-Su Borough for the Meadow Lakes Special Land Use District Planning Team
MEETING ATTENDANCE: 14
MEETING MATERIALS: 1) Handouts: Agenda;
2) Graphics – aerial photo with an overlay of the road alignment and current design.
STAFF PRESENT: *ADOT&PF*: Paul Westcott;
HDL: Dennis Linnell; Jeff Fuglestad
Brooks & Associates: Anne Brooks

MEETING INFORMATION:

The meeting began with Teresa Brewer from the Mat-Su Borough introduced the project team before turning the meeting over to the project team. This was the SPUD committee, the special land use district planning team and they wanted a presentation about what we were doing.

Anne Brooks introduced the project team and explained where we are with the project. We are currently completing the preliminary engineering document, which documents the road design for the environment assessment that is underway. Once the preliminary engineering report is complete, we will be posting the preliminary engineering report on the web and providing notification to the community that the document is available for review. Then we will proceed with completing the environment assessment. The timing for the environment assessment completion is some time in the spring of 2007.

After my short intro, I turned the podium over to Dennis Linnell. Dennis walked through the road design, explaining that the project begins as Lucas Roadway with a continuation of the five-lane section that goes through Wasilla. At Church Road, the project transitions into a two-lane divided highway with intersections on half-mile spacing to provide for left-turning movements with signals at Lucas, Church Road, Stanley, Vine, and Pittman.

Dennis explained that the half-mile spacing for left turning movements is to provide for spacing as the area develops, if we need to provide signals, they want to have the development patterns and the customer use familiar with the half-mile spacing. It provides optimum spacing for traffic signals. The project team is adding frontage roads using the existing roads to the extent possible and then extending those as possible. Dennis noted that there are approximately 140 properties impacted with right-of-way needs. He didn't have the exact number of total acquisitions.

There is some interest in cleaning up the right-of-way, particularly between the railroad and the highway near Pittman Roadway, there is just a very narrow strip of land that the project would be acquiring. The median at the turning locations is 42' wide. This allows for queuing of vehicles when they are negotiating a turn.

Dennis then asked for any questions about the project. Questions and comments from the District Planning Team members are noted below with the project team answers in *italics*.

Are you familiar with the u-turn at the Palmer-Wasilla Highway. *Yes. It is different than what we are proposing on the Parks Highway Project. That particular u-turn is only 16' wide. So a lot of the trucks can't negotiate it. We're looking at a 42' wide median, which will enable larger trucks to negotiate the u-turns.*

What about doubles – meaning double trailer units – traveling on a road at 55 mph. How ancient is this design, how are you going to accommodate those? At Tesoro there are a lot of lowboys and lots of heavy traffic. Also accessing Fisher Fuel. *The design vehicle will accommodate that. There are frontage roads that will accommodate some of the trucks. But the design should accommodate those doubles.*

The traffic is very heavy at most times of the day. The left-turning movements will definitely help, the design will help.

One gentleman noted that he thought the design was a significant mistake at Meadow Lakes Road, between Holiday and Pittman. He thinks we need a larger turning pocket because on a normal day they will have instances of 6-8 cars queued out of that particular intersection. *The way the traffic would be accommodated, Dennis noted, that you would make a right turn out of Meadow Lakes Road onto the Parks Highway, merge into the left lane, then negotiate a left-turn at the next median opening. Then proceed towards Wasilla.*

Commenters noted that currently semi-trucks park on the shoulder at the Holiday gas station. It blocks visibility. Wanted to know how would we remedy that in the design.

Commenters talked about QAP and access at Vine Road, were they going to get access there.

Currently the issue at Vine Road is the need for a railroad crossing. The Alaska Railroad has been reluctant to date to add another at-grade crossing in the area. So, it is not included in the project.

One commenter noted that the team did a great job with the project. His only concern was at the Meadow Lakes Road intersection.

Another commenter noted that he hates the five-lane through Wasilla. He had concerns for the merchants. In our project, merchants that have businesses along the roadway, he indicated that at the last public meeting, the merchants expressed concern about people just driving through and not having access to their businesses. He felt that the merchants were against the divided highway. He felt that it wasn't right to shut them off. *The project design is a real balancing act between the needs of the through traffic and the needs of the merchants. If folks have comments or suggestions on how we can sign the roadway to enable to get to the merchants, we would appreciate that. Dennis also noted that the median turnouts are considerably safer than the five-lane roadway.*

One commenter asked why the frontage road didn't go all the way to Pittman from Meadow Lakes Roadway. *Dennis noted that there isn't enough space near B&J Mall to accommodate a frontage road. But the local roads, Marigold, could accommodate that frontage type traffic.*

One commenter noted that in the Meadow Lakes Area, near the town center, the community's desire to have more of a boulevard appearance to the roadway.

Commenters noted and asked about the pedestrian facilities that would be accommodated along the roadway. They are particularly concerned about ATV, 4-wheeler, and snow machine access across the Parks Highway at Pittman Road. They were hoping for an underpass tunnel or an overpass. They commented that they were familiar with what has been done near Wasilla Lake under the railroad and the Parks Highway in that area. Asked if that could possibly be accommodated in this area.

Another comment regarded the lighting in the area. *The design team responded that they are recommending continuous lighting for the entire corridor. To just light the road. The state hasn't agreed to this yet.*

Question was asked, what happens at Big Lake Road? *Dennis responded that there will be a left-hand acceleration lane. No traffic signal at this time and no interchange at this time. But that there would be acceleration lanes, a free right turning from Big Lake Road onto the Parks Highway to the right and a left-hand acceleration lane to allow folks to get up to speed in the center and merge into the Parks Highway traffic.*

One Commenter asked if there was going to be a light at Johnson Road—a traffic signal? *We indicated that none was planned at this time. There are also no signals between Big Lake and Pittman.*

Question was asked whether the traffic signal at Vine, when that would come online? *Currently the State Department of Transportation is looking at installing that signal in the summer of 2007, with left-turning pockets.*

More discussion about the crosswalk and pedestrian access at Pittman Road. One of the suggestions made was that we provide “no right on red” at that location. *The project team indicated that there would be adequate time for pedestrians to cross at that location.*

The community indicated that snow machine/ATV traffic is important to the community. A lot of folks, for example, will take their snow machine down and have breakfast at Cadillac Café.

One commenter asked that we take another look at the intersection crossing at Vine. They indicated that there are no other exits from the Meadow Lake Community. If a train is blocking Pittman Road, then it’s difficult to get out of their community. They mentioned a concern for emergency exit at that location and felt that we should look at that in the long-term.

One commenter asked what the current level of service is in the Meadow Lakes area and what the future level of service would be in that area. *The project team responded that they did not have the exact number in front of them, but they believe that the level of service was currently D and that the level of service in the 25-year planning horizon would likely be D or F.*

The Wasilla Bypass came up in the conversation. *The project team pointed out that regardless of what happens with the Wasilla Bypass, the four-lane divided highway and the plan for the Parks Highway that is being discussed will still be a needed project.*

The project team indicated that a second bridge would be added near the Museum Road to provide for the second set of lanes and that the new bridge would be added for the west bound, or out of Anchorage, travelers. That would be consistent throughout the project. The current two-lane highway would become half of the four-lane divided highway. New lanes would be built on the north side. So, during construction we would be able to complete the other two lanes and still retain the two-lanes that are under consideration.

Again, another question about bike paths. And pedestrian traffic. *The project plans for a 10’ wide multi-use pathway along the entire corridor. They’re not intended for motorized traffic, which led to a question by a commenter.*

Whether or not we would provide flat-bottomed ditches or traversable ditches. *The project team committed to doing that where possible.*

One commenter asked what the project would be doing for water quality. What kind of mitigation for run-off? Indicating that water quality was a concern for the area. *The project team responded that we don’t have specifics at this time. Most of the drainage would be like it exists with snow being cleared into a roadside ditch to percolate into the ground. There may be some drainage basins needed in the Johnson Road and Meadow Lake area. The details on water quality would be worked out in design.*

One thing that the project team did note regarding drainage is that the intent is to raise the elevation at Pittman of the Parks Highway at Pittman Road, which will help with drainage and will also help with, currently you come down a hill to Parks Highway, off of Pittman and it will help with that and problems during winter.

The group asked what the construction sequencing would be. *Dennis noted that the existing Parks Highway would become two-lanes of the four-lane divided and we would add the other two lanes in the corridor so you could construct them and keep the current roadway open at all times.*

Commenter asked if we have to go to court to get right-of-way. *The project team responded that this is a project that is being funded with federal dollars. There is a very prescribed process for acquisition of right-of-way that involves appraisals to determine fair market value, compensation for property owners, tenants in businesses and residences in any of the properties affected and that at future meetings we would be able to provide a right-of-way agent to provide more detail about the process.*

Teresa Brewer from Mat-Su Borough indicated that there were several things in the Meadow Lakes Comprehensive Plan scope and wanted to know what the status of they were and how they would relate to our project. One of the things was future park-n-rides in the area, one of the audience noted that Mascot, the Mat-Su bus service is already in the area. They have pick-ups at the Big Lake Center and the B&J Mall on a daily basis.

Someone asked about the commuter train. *Currently, according to the project team, there are no park-n-rides identified in the project corridor. If the community felt that there was a need and could identify locations, it's something that could be incorporated at a future date.*

One commenter noted that a native corporation owns 20-40 acres in the area and had talked a little bit about a park-n-ride. Their property borders the railroad track on the north side of the road near Pittman. Another commenter asked the group if there was a problem with vandalism. That question was answered by other members of the group, who indicated that when they commuted and used the park-n-ride, they had no problems. But they thought that the presence of a business or cameras helps keep the vandalism down.

Related documents on file:

- Sign in Sheets
- Handouts (Comment Sheet)
- Meeting graphics