

Rogers Park Community Council

(Including Anchor Park, College Village, Woodside East and Rogers Park)

Pete Mjos, President
Ph (907) 306-4231
Email: rogersparkcc@gmail.com

Scott McMurren, Vice President
Cassandra Raun, Secretary
Ric Wilson, Treasurer

February 4, 2022

Municipality of Anchorage Planning Department
Current Planning Division
PO Box 196650
Anchorage Alaska 99519-6650

Attention: Elizabeth Appleby

Subject: Case Number 2022-0023

Context Sensitive Solutions Transportation Project Site Plan Review for Seward Highway: 36th Avenue Interchange (MOA/ADOT&PF project #CSHWY00298).

The Rogers Park Community Council has the following comments on Application for a Context Sensitive Solutions Transportation Project Site Plan Review for Seward Highway: 36th Avenue Interchange.

Section 4.1 Project Design Criteria, Table 2

Table 2 provides posted speed limits for the Seward Highway of 50 mph between Benson Boulevard to 36th Avenue, slowing to 45 mph just south of Benson Boulevard. This is an increase of the speed limit in this area.

In a January 13, 2020 Resolution 2020-01 regarding the Midtown Congestion Relief Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study and reinforced with an April 12, 2021 resolution regarding the Seward Highway 36th Interchange Project (both resolutions attached), RPCC advocated for a maximum speed limit of 35 mph on frontage roads and 45 mph on the highway through the entire midtown area.

Increasing the speed limit on the highway to 50 mph makes no sense. Traffic will need to come to a stop at Benson Boulevard and will now need to do it on a downgrade. This is a safety project and Section 5.4.1 of this report notes the efficacy of decreased speeds in reducing collisions. Decreased speed will also help resolve one of the most significant impacts of this

project which is noise. The travel time through the project area by raising the speed limit will save only 4 seconds. By holding it at 45 mph we can increase safety and reduce noise.

Section 5.4.3 - How the Project will Tie into Other Projects

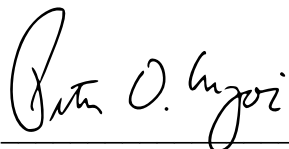
In the above referenced resolutions we expressed unanimous support for a future depressed freeway through the council area, passing under Benson, Northern Lights, and Fireweed. At our May 10, 2021 community council meeting it was explicitly stated “Everything at 36th Avenue is being designed to be forward compatible with a depressed freeway at Benson Boulevard, Northern Lights Boulevard and Fireweed Lane, as recommended in the PEL Study.

Yet there is no mention of this in Section 5.4.3. We request that this be specifically mentioned in this section. We also request that a sufficient level of design be done to the Benson/NL/Fireweed section to ensure this compatibility.

Section 5.5.1 Loop Ramp Alternative 1... (Preferred)

The listed first advantage of putting the Seward Highway over 36th Avenue is that it reduces the likelihood of a bridge strike at this intersection. Please provide assurance that this same argument will not be used against a future depressed freeway at Benson Boulevard, Northern Lights Boulevard and Fireweed Lane, as recommended in the PEL Study.

Respectfully,



Pete Mjos, President

Rogers Park Community Council

Rogers Park Community Council

(Including Anchor Park, College Village, Woodside East and Rogers Park)

Janet Bidwell, President
rogersparkcc@gmail.com

Linda Chase, Vice-President
Steve Lindbeck, Secretary
Ric Wilson, Treasurer
Jim Wright, Past President

Date: January 13, 2020

RPCC Resolution 2020-01

To: State of Alaska – Department of Transportation
Dowl Engineering – Attn: Steve Noble

CC: Mayor Ethan Berkowitz, Mayor of Anchorage
Anchorage Assembly Members
Alaska State Legislature
Midtown Community Council
Tudor Area Community Council

Anchorage Municipal Clerk
Federation of Community Councils
Fairview Community Council
North Star Community Council
Airport Heights Community Council

A RESOLUTION OF THE ROGERS PARK COMMUNITY COUNCIL REGARDING THE MIDTOWN CONGESTION RELIEF STUDY

WHEREAS, Rogers Park Community Council (RPCC) has been closely involved with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF), Midtown Congestion Relief Study (MCR) over the past two years;

WHEREAS, ADOT&PF and its consultant DOWL, in a Draft Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study Report dated November 2019, have identified a preferred concept;

WHEREAS, the preferred concept proposes to acquire nearly all its additional right-of-way from the east side of the existing Seward Highway and will greatly disrupt the Rogers Park community, resulting in longtime neighbors being forced to leave, loss of friends and community, the potential for increased construction and traffic noise, and the potential for loss in property value;

WHEREAS, we have not been provided sufficient information to evaluate the potential right-of-way acquisition between Northern Lights and 20th Avenue;

WHEREAS, the most recent Metropolitan Transportation Plan currently places the depressed freeway portion of this project in the 2040 timeframe, potentially resulting in an interim project being in place for many years;

WHEREAS, we are greatly concerned about the lack of ideas for the extensive median area in this “interim project” which could create additional swaths of unmaintained, underutilized, and un-programed public land in an area with high property values and growing population density;

Rogers Park Community Council

(Including Anchor Park, College Village, Woodside East and Rogers Park)

WHEREAS, the PEL construction cost estimate may be used for establishing future project budgets and funding, and we want to be certain that the PEL does not underestimate project costs;

WHEREAS, the ADOT&PF response to RPCC Additional Questions – Request No. 2:

- a) Said that *“sound walls are part of the depressed highway line item.”*
- b) Did not provide the requested unit prices associated with the MCR sound walls, the Glenn Highway/Muldoon interchange sound walls, or the unit price associated with cover over the depressed freeway.
- c) Said that *“the elevated freeway still needs to be evaluated during the environmental process to compare potential effects of either an elevated or depressed freeway in this area.”*
- d) Said that *“Proposed active transportation facilities running north-south through the project area will be separated from the edge of traveled way by a curb and 8-foot buffer. Additionally, the sidewalks are proposed to be widened to 10-feet”* but *“...cross streets will not be provided with a buffer between the sidewalk and traveled way.”*
- e) Said that the cost estimate for the proposed bridge over Chester Creek was based on bridge dimensions of 188 feet (E-W) and 36 feet (N-S).

WHEREAS, the A Street bridge over Chester Creek spans 120 feet (N-S);

WHEREAS, the RPCC advocates for non-vehicular/multimodal infrastructure to be more thoughtfully incorporated into the design and acknowledges this by insisting that the design include accessible, safe, buffered, well-lit, and year-round maintained multimodal transportation along and across the Seward Highway as it will promote health, safety and welfare for the overall community as well as reduce vehicular trips thereby reducing congestion in the region.

Now therefore, be it resolved that the RPCC:

- 1) Concurs with the elimination of any further consideration of an elevated freeway alternative in the PEL study and in future planning, design, and construction processes, and the RPCC requests that section 6.5 of the PEL report be revised to specifically state that the community *and the project team* do not support bringing an elevated highway forward for any consideration during the environmental process.
- 2) Concurs with a depressed freeway, with cover where feasible.
- 3) Concurs with a 35 MPH speed limit, enforced by signal timing, on the frontage roads.
- 4) Concurs with using a bridge to replace the Chester Creek culvert and the Chester Creek Trail culvert, such as at the A Street crossing of Chester Creek, and requests that the current PEL cost estimate for the bridge at Chester Creek be increased by a factor of two to account for a more realistic bridge north-south span.
- 5) Concurs with maintaining the existing turning restrictions at Fireweed Lane.
- 6) Concurs with conveying northbound traffic from the proposed frontage road onto the depressed freeway south of Fireweed Lane. This will reduce noise and reduce traffic at the Fireweed Lane intersection.
- 7) Requests that the entire project, for all phases, including the depressed freeway, be designed to at least a preliminary (e.g., 35 percent) level before any construction north of Tudor Road begins. This will be necessary for ROW acquisition and utility relocation, and it will help ensure that the final project can and will be constructed.

Rogers Park Community Council

(Including Anchor Park, College Village, Woodside East and Rogers Park)

- 8) Requests that Anchorage Traffic Model be updated with the most recent Alaska Department of Labor population projections; that the PEL report or subsequent “environmental” reports be updated with the expected future traffic volumes, levels of service, traffic safety, and other traffic operations metrics based on the updated Traffic Model; that the reports include a thorough discussion of the effects of delaying the various phases of the project by five, ten, or fifteen years; that the PEL report or subsequent “environmental” reports include a robust discussion of alternative safety improvement projects that could be done to mitigate traffic safety issues if one or more MCR phases is delayed by five, ten, or fifteen years.
- 9) Requests that design and construction of the depressed freeway be tightly sequenced after the initial phases. If that is not feasible, we request that the interim project be designed and constructed with the amenities of a “final” project.
- 10) Requests that right-of-way (ROW) and sound barrier discussions with Ingra Street residents continue and that residents of both sides of Ingra Street be satisfied with the resulting solution. Specifically:
 - a) A ROW plan must be developed, with input from the residents, that:
 - i) Provides each homeowner on the west side of Ingra Street the option for full acquisition.
 - ii) Illustrates sound barrier options (wall or earthen berm) including the materials, placement, aesthetic features, height, and landscaping.
 - iii) Takes sound barrier designs to a level of completion that is sufficient to demonstrate and ensure that future traffic sound levels on Ingra Street are the same or lower than they are today.
 - iv) Includes a map of re-platted properties identifying which homes are proposed to remain, if re-platting is proposed.
 - v) Includes concept-level drawings of each property showing proposed locations of the homes, outbuildings, driveways, sidewalks, etc., if the plan suggests that homes be relocated on existing or reconfigured lots.
 - b) Project reports, plans, cost estimates, budgets, and funding must include the cost of all amenities, including sound barriers and landscaping, as a required cost of the MCR project.
 - c) Residents on the east side of Ingra Street must be compensated for their home value losses due to MCR project or given justification as to why the project will not impact the home values.
 - d) The sound barrier must:
 - i) Be a minimum of 12’ tall.
 - ii) Be extensively landscaped on the residential side so that it is not obtrusive to residents and be landscaped on the highway side so that it is visually appealing.
 - iii) Be constructed and landscaped shortly after right-of-way acquisition and prior to road construction, to mitigate construction noise and impacts; that is, it must be included in the cost estimate for Project C (corridor widening and frontage road construction) not Project E (depressed freeway construction).
 - e) If the sound barrier is a wall, it must be visually appealing, such as the sound wall at the Glenn Highway and Muldoon interchange.
 - f) If there is a sound barrier on the west (commercial) side of the highway, we request that it be designed to absorb and not reflect sound.
 - g) The numerous mature trees that are between the existing houses on the west side of Ingra Street and Ingra Street must be untouched.
- 11) Requests that street lighting along the highway corridor be low level and unobtrusive to residents and consider multimodal traffic.

Rogers Park Community Council

(Including Anchor Park, College Village, Woodside East and Rogers Park)

- 12) Requests that power transmission lines north of Northern Lights Boulevard be undergrounded.
- 13) Requests that construction adjacent to residential areas be limited to standard daytime working hours.
- 14) Requests that the neighborhood entryway at Fireweed Boulevard be reconstructed during the project that widens the corridor (as described in section 10.2.3 of the draft PEL). The new entryway should match the existing entryways at Fireweed Lane and Latouche Street.
- 15) Requests that cross streets (E-W streets) and associated bridges be provided with buffers between the pathways and traveled ways. The buffers shall consist of either sufficient distance and pathway width (similar to the N-S pathways) or other features or barriers, so as to prevent the pathways from being used as de facto road snow storage areas.
- 16) Requests that the MCR PEL team demonstrate to the RPCC, no later than February 28, 2020, that the PEL cost estimate contains reasonable estimates for sound barriers, landscaping, the bridge over Chester Creek, and cover over the depressed freeway.
- 17) Appreciates the provision of the “Community Place-making” Project and looks forward to participating.
- 18) Appreciates the process through which this PEL report was prepared, but due to lack of detail on the effects to residents of Ingra Street, **the RPCC is unable to support the MCR project** until the ROW plan is clear and acceptable to Ingra Street residents.

THIS RESOLUTION WAS **APPROVED** by the Rogers Park Community Council on January 13, 2020, by a vote of: FOR 23, AGAINST 1, ABSTAIN 1.

Janet Bidwell

Janet Bidwell
President
Rogers Park Community Council

ROGERS PARK COMMUNITY COUNCIL
RESOLUTION 2021-02

A RESOLUTION OF THE ROGERS PARK COMMUNITY COUNCIL REGARDING THE
SEWARD HIGHWAY: 36th INTERCHANGE PROJECT

WHEREAS, Rogers Park Community Council (RPCC) was closely involved with the recent Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), Midtown Congestion Relief Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study;

WHEREAS, DOT&PF and its consultant DOWL are proceeding with preliminary design and environmental permitting of the first PEL project to move forward, the Seward Highway 36th Interchange (hereafter "project");

WHEREAS, on March 16, 2021, the project team held its first public meeting; presented four highway alternatives for the interchange; stated that they are evaluating whether the Seward Highway should be elevated above 36th or depressed below 36th, with 36th remaining approximately at grade for all alternatives; and requested feedback on all project issues;

WHEREAS, the RPCC's January 13, 2020 Resolution 2020-01 regarding the PEL supported a future depressed freeway through the council area (RPCC extends from 36th to Chester Creek), opposed an elevated freeway, advocated for the thoughtful design of non-vehicular components of future PEL projects, and advocated for a 35 mph speed limit on frontage roads;

WHEREAS, in the March 16 open house, the project team stated that all highway alternatives for the 36th interchange, whether the highway passes over or under 36th, would be designed to allow future extension of the highway under Benson, Northern Lights, and Fireweed;

WHEREAS, in the March 16 open house, the project team stated that the DOT&PF had not decided whether an Environmental Assessment was needed; and

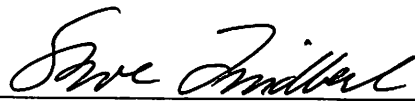
WHEREAS, the no-build and at-grade alternatives will not be evaluated unless an Environmental Assessment is performed;

Now therefore, be it resolved that the RPCC continues to support:

1. a future depressed freeway through the council area, passing under 36th, as well as under Benson, Northern Lights, and Fireweed in the future;
2. non-motorized facilities along and across the highway corridor that are accessible, safe, buffered, well-lit, usable year-round, and designed to minimize the winter maintenance effort;
3. a maximum speed limit of 35 mph on frontage roads and 45 mph on the highway through the entire midtown area; and
4. an Environmental Assessment for the 36th Interchange Project.

NOTE: this resolution is intended to reinforce and confirm the relevance of Resolution 2020-01 as it pertains to the project at hand. Resolution 2020-01 requests several accommodations that will be pertinent to other future PEL projects.

THIS RESOLUTION WAS APPROVED by the Rogers Park Community Council on April 12, 2021 by a vote of: FOR 23, AGAINST 0, ABSTAIN 5.



Steve Lindbeck, President
Rogers Park Community Council