19 July 2019

Attn: Thede Tobish and Joni Wilm
Municipality of Anchorage Planning Department
4700 Elmore Road, PO Box 196650, Anchorage AK 99519
By Electronic Mail: amatsinfo@muni.org

Re: June 4, 2019, Spenard Corridor Plan Public Review Draft

Dear Thede and Joni,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to provide comments on the June 4, 2019, Spenard Corridor Plan Public Review Draft. As you know, the Spenard Community Council has great confidence in the work you have committed to this document. We have adopted this plan as our own and intend to campaign to have the Anchorage Assembly adopt it as the official neighborhood plan for the Spenard Community Council.

We appreciate the earnest and enduring effort you have made to reach out to the far distant segments of our diverse community council area. Your public process has been outstanding and we appreciate your hard work. Our community members will choose their favorite aspects of this plan and work hand-in-hand with stakeholders and public agency partners to make sure this excellent document does not gather dust on a shelf. We intend to see it implemented and we will share the responsibility to see it become reality.

Our comments are organized into three sections. Please find this introductory letter followed by chapter-delineated comments prepared by Lindsey Hajduk for the Spenard Community Council Executive Board and, finally, a response grid in spreadsheet form compiling our Council comments and recommendations.

We are thankful for the opportunity to help make this great document even better. Please don’t hesitate to contact us for clarifications or questions.

Sincerely,

Jay Stange, President
Spenard Community Council
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(917) 601-3165
SCP – Chapter 1: Introduction

Planning Context

Page 7 refers to the SCP Planning Context. A key planning policy and effort relevant to the SCP should include the municipality’s Vision Zero initiative. However, this Vision Zero Action Plan is not referred to within the document. This should be a plan referred to in this section and throughout the SCP. Vision Zero is a community commitment to reduce the loss of life and major injuries on roadways to zero through data-driven and coordinated approaches to design safer streets, public education, evaluating what works, and enforcing the best laws. The focus areas incorporate solutions for engineering and infrastructure, education, evaluation, encouragement, and enforcement.

**Solution:** Include the Vision Zero Action Plan as a guiding policy and effort for the SCP.

SCP – Chapter 2: Vision/Overarching Principles

Spenard Corridor Overarching Principles

Pages 14-20 refer to the SCP Overarching Principles. The “Principle 9: Accommodate Safe and Balanced Automobile Access” offers a focus in conflict with priorities of the plan. Safe automobile access is necessary, but that takes away from the point that safety is necessary for all roadway users including people on foot, bike, and bus. This is again a way to incorporate the Vision Zero initiative into the planning context for the SCP. Encouraging more access on bike, foot, and bus would alleviate stress on vehicular access.

Lower speed limits increase road safety according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. A person on bike or foot is 90% likely to survive a collision with a vehicle that was traveling 20mph; 60% likely to survive at 30mph; and only 20% likely to survive at 40 mph. The traffic speeds along Spenard Road at 35 miles per hour.

**Solution:** Rewrite Principle 9 to “Accommodate Safe and Balanced Roadway Access” to include all roadway users and reduce traffic speeds.

The “Principle 10: Accommodate and Manage Parking” identifies an important concern especially along the Spenard road near 27th Avenue as well as along neighborhood streets.
**Solution:** Allow for parking districts or ways for businesses to pool parking areas together to meet the needs of a region.

The “Principle 13: Integrate Fish Creek as a Centerpiece for Spenard” is an important priority for community members throughout the corridor.

**Recommendation:** Continue to prioritize the Fish Creek corridor daylighting as a long-term priority for the region.

**SCP – Chapter 3: Plan Concept/Framework**

**Plan Framework Policies**

Page 23 and subsequent maps (Figures 3.2-8) display the Plan Concept plan area maps. A conspicuous deletion from the plan area map is Minnesota Drive, essentially a 6-lane high speed corridor through the heart of the Spenard neighborhood and Corridor Plan. Concepts around connecting features on either side of Spenard Road itself cannot be taken into consideration without Minnesota Dr., which is an important regional feature that needs to be incorporated into planning and solutions offered in the SCP.

**Solution:** Ensure Minnesota Dr. is fully incorporated into the SCP to ensure planning solutions are able to address the needs within the plan area.

Page 26 refers to Central Spenard with important recommended improvements along Spenard Road itself. Additional priorities have also been identified throughout the SCP and are worth mentioning in this section regarding daylighting Fish Creek as well as redevelopment along Chugach Way.

**Solution:** Include redevelopment of Chugach Way as an important consideration to improve the safety, access, and character of “Central Spenard.”

Pages 29-33 refer to the Active Transportation Network. The overall vision and principles identified in the SCP are integrated well into this section, painting an exciting vision for access in the corridor. There are a number of additional recommendations to include to better represent the proposed Active Transportation Network, network facilities and crossings.

**Solutions:** For the proposed Active Transportation Network in Figure 3.5

- Feature the existing Fish Creek Trail multi-use path, as it is currently hard to identify from the road networks. It is an important feature in the community and will also better illustrate how the proposed daylighted Fish Creek area would be additive to the community.
• The entirety of Minnesota Drive from Tudor Rd. to Hillcrest Dr. should be identified as a Secondary Active Network. There should be safe sidewalks or multi-use path facilities along the corridor to accommodate for people on foot and by bike. Currently sidewalks are narrow and directly next to three lanes of 45+ mph traffic. Neighborhoods throughout the plan area are often segmented and obstructed, leaving the pathway along Minnesota Dr. as the best option for active transportation. Potential intersection changes along Minnesota Dr. should also allow for the active network to continue along the roadway.

• There is a “Potential Festival Street” illustrated in Figure 3.5 east of Minnesota Dr. but it is not featured on Figure 3.6. A description of the potential festival streets and intersection changes needs explanation.

• There may be potential to include “potential intersection changes” at Arctic and Chugach Way.

**Solution:** Ensure that potential pedestrian and bicycle facilities meet NACTO standards, as outlined on page 32. Current guidelines and standards used within Alaska are outdated and no longer meet best practice.

Page 33 refers to Crossings. There are a number of innovative approaches to improve pedestrian safety within Anchorage and within the SCP. Currently pedestrians disproportionately suffer serious injury and death in traffic collisions in our city. According to Anchorage’s Vision Zero Action Plan, 1 in 22 pedestrians die in vehicle collisions.

**Solution:** Include innovative solutions at traffic crossings.

• Change the lights at key crossings to include a 5 second “head start” for bicyclists and pedestrians.

• Remove the three-way crosswalks on Minnesota Dr. at both Benson and Northern Lights Blvd. to allow four-way crosswalks to deter jay-walking.

• Include safe crossings every 0.25 miles along key stretches of roadway.

**Generalized Land Use**

Page 35 includes a map of the Proposed Land Use within some of the SCP; however it does not include land use in the entire plan area and does not include current park, natural areas or open spaces like at Red Bridge Park, Wilson Street Park, Barbara Street Park, Fish Creek Park, Cope Street Park, Fish Creek Trail, and potentially more. Daylighting Fish Creek can also include proposed new park and open spaces along its corridor not currently represented on the map. These parks and trails are important open spaces in the community and should be identified in the Proposed Land Use.

**Solution:** Include all current parks, natural areas, and open spaces in Figure 3.7 to ensure they are included as priorities to maintain and expand upon in planning efforts.
Open Space Network

Page 37-39 refer to the proposed Open Space Network, shown as Figure 3.8. There are exciting new components included, like the note about the potential for the Alaska Railroad trail. The Fish Creek Greenbelt and primary active network along it is an important priority for the community. These regional open space features described on page 39 are exciting opportunities to build on the Anchorage 2040 Land-Use Plan for greenway-supported development. More of this.

Street Edge Character

Page 43 includes information about street edge character recommendations throughout the corridor. It should also be recommended that Residential Streets should include sidewalk facilities throughout the plan area especially where school bus pick-ups take place.

Further explanation about the “Main Streets” and “Mixed-Use Streets” needs to be defined. At this stage “Main Street” character on Spenard Road would go from Hillcrest to Wisconsin. Then from Wisconsin to International Airport Rd. would be “Mixed-Use Street” character. It is not clearly stated that both of these characters include the accommodations of on-street bicycling infrastructure, including bicycle lanes, protected bicycle lanes, or elevated bicycle lanes. This is a major oversight.

Solution: Include language on how bicycle infrastructure, as well as what accommodations will be made for bus pullouts, are included in “Main Street” and “Mixed-Use Street” character.

SCP – Chapter 4: District Specific Concepts

B. Central District

Page 62-63. The map includes a distribution of land use and development character in the central district. There are some current “park, natural area or open space” along Minnesota Dr. that should continue to be incorporated into future design. This is one of the first maps to include Minnesota Dr. as a “commercial street” and clearly illustrate it as a break within the character of this corridor planning area.

Solution: Include the park and open space along Minnesota Dr. and consider how to connect it to other space within the corridor planning area.

Page 64 includes a “Central District Policy #4: Transit” where we support the location of a major transit hub near the Spenard Road and Alaska Railroad. Public transportation is an important feature throughout the neighborhood and should continue to lead future planning efforts.
A road diet concept on Spenard should also be considered from 30th to 33rd and also Minnesota Dr. to McRae. The road diet north of 30th Avenue has been successful and may be able to accommodate and make the roadway safer for all users. Currently the four-lane configuration seems over-built during peak traffic times and may be better suited for 3-lanes.

The maps on pages 64 and 73 do not include the Fish Creek trail or the bicycle lanes along Turnagain Blvd. There is a lack of consistency between maps to show how the transportation networks connect overlaid on to land use and development character. We would recommend that these are included.

**Solution:** Include roadways that intersect with Spenard with specific “street edge characters” on the maps.

**SCP – Chapter 5: Circulation and Connectivity**

**Overarching Circulation Policies**

Page 83-84 includes priorities that strive for a better balanced and integrated transportation system, prioritizing pedestrian, bicyclists, and public transit users and is well aligned with the community’s priorities.

**Neighborhood Street Design Alternatives**

Pages 86-87 include different street designs that would incorporate all roadway users, including moving on-street parking further from through-traffic. All the strategies would make improvement on existing neighborhood streets.

**Major Street Design Alternatives**

In general, design that reduces conflict between pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as vehicles, is preferable. Multi-use trails often remove bicyclists from vehicle drivers’ line of vision and can lead to conflicts at intersections because of the speed of bicyclists versus pedestrians. All the designs on pages 88-89 offer exciting improvements to our current road systems.

**Spenard Road “Middle Segment” Street Design**

Page 91 illustrates important and much needed “mid-block” and “minor” crossings. These treatments should be made along the Spenard Road as soon as possible.

Page 90 also includes information about a proposed one-way couplet, which is largely opposed by community members and should not move forward.
Page 92-93 includes designs for Spenard from Minnesota to 30th. The “Proposed Option 1” is preferable with the elevated bicycle lanes also serving as a buffer to pedestrians. The consideration of a road diet to 3-lanes is also essential. The “Proposed Option 1 and 2 Alternatives” appear to include the one-way couplet and should not move forward.

Roadway Classification/Vehicular Speed

Page 97 details important changes that need to happen in order to reduce the speed along the Spenard Rd., which will improve the design and safety along the corridor. We fully support the recommendations included in this section to move forward.

Bicycle Network

The Spenard Bicycle Network should not only build off the current Anchorage Bike Plan, but also the Vision Zero Action Plan, and current plans being created, including the Anchorage Non-Motorized Plan.

Bicycle friendly intersections should follow NACTO standards for best practice. Current crossings include “bike boxes” that do not follow best practice.

Page 105 includes a map of the Future Bicycle Network. There are a number of recommendations for this map and language included in the document.

Solutions:

- Spenard should have bike lanes along its entire stretch, including from Northwood to International Airport Rd., not as a multi-use path. The Southern portion of Spenard road has a high number of driveways for commercial use, so on-street bicycle infrastructure reduces conflict with vehicles.
- Minnesota Dr. should be included as part of the active network. It should have multi-use paths along it as it is an important connector between businesses, neighborhoods, and more as previously stated.
- 32nd is being considered to include bicycle lanes and a multi-use path connecting it east of Arctic and should include this.
- Designs on pages 88-89 included potential bicycle lanes on Fireweed Ln. Fireweed should be included as such on this map, not as a “shared-use roadway.”
- Tudor Rd. currently has a mixture of sidewalk, multi-use path, and extremely wide shoulders. Tudor has the potential to have bicycle lanes on this stretch and not just default to “multi-use path” designation and should be considered (and potentially is considered in the Anchorage Non-Motorized Plan).
- 36th Ave also has the potential to receive a road diet and include on-street bicycle infrastructure (and potentially is considered in the Anchorage Non-Motorized Plan).
- The Fish Creek multi-use trail should be included in this map as it is an important feature in the connectivity of the bicycle network in this community.
SCP – Chapter 6: Utility Infrastructure

Wastewater and stormwater infrastructure should take Fish Creek into consideration. Currently Fish Creek is diverted, culverted, and fractured throughout the community. Runoff from roadways flow untreated into Fish Creek. Improvements should work to improve the health of the waterway. City contractors such as DOWL and HDR Inc. have noted in numerous documents the efficacy of managing stormwater above ground in a restored surface creek with associated greenway development as an affordable alternative to stormwater pipe.

SCP – Chapter 7: Implementation

The Spenard Corridor Plan represents a community plan to be implemented for the next 30 years. It is the closest thing to a community vision for Spenard that will exist for the neighborhood. The Anchorage Assembly should officially adopt this plan and ensure its incorporation and implementation into all municipality actions within the planning area going forward.

Spenard Community Council Comments Response Grid
June 4, 2019, Spenard Corridor Plan Public Review Draft

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Number</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Suggestion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Principle 3: Create Great Public Streets</td>
<td>The Spenard Community Council is on record supporting development of Spenard Road as a &quot;main street&quot; facility and recommends design on Spenard Road to include Vision Zero characteristics, including building the road with lane widths and buffering to accommodate 20-25mph design standards.</td>
<td>Remove &quot;To the extent feasible,&quot; replace with &quot;Walkability should be maximized...etc.&quot;</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Principle 13: Integrate Fish Creek as a</td>
<td>Fish Creek daylighting is referenced by 2040 Plan and</td>
<td>Add to the sentence ending with &quot;...consistent with the Anchorage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plan Concept/Framework</td>
<td>The barrier between residential and commercial areas created by Minnesota Boulevard should be addressed here.</td>
<td>Ensure community recommendations to lower speeds, add pedestrian and Fish Creek crossings and remove lanes on Minnesota Blvd. are fully incorporated into the Corridor Plan, though plan managers recognize Alaska DOT-owned roadways are subject to different governance and planning processes. The community would like to see a large banner/sign welcoming Northbound Minnesota Blvd. traffic to Spenard and inviting visitors to slow down to 35 mph and to enjoy an additional 5 minutes of time in the best neighborhood in Anchorage.</td>
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<td>Figure 3.3 Framework Map</td>
<td>The community uses 34th Avenue as a non-motorized crossing for the Alaska Railroad. At one time in history, it was an at-grade crossing which allowed automobiles much like the 36th Avenue crossing does today.</td>
<td>Add an enhanced street crossing symbol to the intersection of the Alaska Railroad and 34th Avenue.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Figure 3.4 Transit Supportive Development Districts</td>
<td>Plan area boundary line indicating North, Central and South Districts is ambiguous re: density changes for Transit Oriented Development.</td>
<td>Orange line on map around districts is easy to mistake for a recommended boundary line for increased residential density (1/4 mile from Spenard Road?). Perhaps reference or overlay page 35 Figure 3.7 Proposed Land Use.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Figure 3.5 Active Transportation Network</td>
<td>Minnesota Boulevard needs additional enhanced street crossing so it is less of a barrier in the neighborhood.</td>
<td>Add enhanced street crossing symbol to 33rd Avenue at Minnesota Blvd. on map.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Figure 3.6 Potential MTP Investment Areas</td>
<td>The community has clearly spoken against routing northbound traffic from Minnesota Blvd. onto Eastbound Spenard Road, a</td>
<td>Remove Potential Intersection Changes shading symbology from area encompassed by 36th Ave., Spenard Road and Minnesota Blvd.</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>Potential Network Facilities</td>
<td>Bicycle lanes on the roadway should only be recommended on streets with posted speeds at or below 25mph. Add language to categories &quot;Bicycle Lanes&quot; and &quot;Shared Use Roadway/Bicycle Boulevard&quot; to clarify these facilities shouldn't be built on roadways with speeds above 25mph. They will not be used by the public, as evidenced by minimal use of narrow bike lane on recently constructed Spenard Road from Hillcrest to 30th Avenue.</td>
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<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Figure 3.8 Open Space Network</td>
<td>Fish Creek Greenbelt concept drawing ends abruptly at Chugach Way Extend Fish Creek Greenbelt to eastern end of Fish Creek setback on Wilshire (at Cope?)</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>Fish Creek Greenbelt</td>
<td>Fish Creek daylighting is referenced by 2040 Plan and refined by Assembly Resolution No. 2018-277, As Amended. Add to the sentence ending with &quot;...consistent with the Anchorage Area Plan 2040&quot; the following language: &quot;...and further refined and delineated by Anchorage Assembly Resolution 2018-277, which supports efforts to daylight Fish Creek, also known by the Dena'ina people as Ch'atanaltsegh LiQ'Aka Betnu, and encouraging the ongoing and future projects to restore, protect and enhance daylighting of Fish Creek.&quot; A benefit of daylighting Fish Creek is to manage stormwater above ground, instead of replacing aging (and expensive) stormwater infrastructure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>62-63</td>
<td>Figure 4.5 Central District Framework</td>
<td>Green space in key is inconsistent with Figure 3.8 Open Space Network (p37) Overlay Fish Creek Greenbelt &quot;Park, Natural Area or Open Space&quot; (including eastern end of Fish Creek setback to Cope Street) Figure 3.8 on Land Use/Development of Character (Figure 4.5 Central District Framework) Remove road designation - Not desired by stakeholders and improbable due to Fish Creek Setback and Sanitary Sewer location</td>
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<tr>
<td>62-63</td>
<td>Figure 4.5 Central District Framework</td>
<td>Inappropriate road easements indicated connecting McCain Loop to Chugach Way Remove road designation - Not desired by stakeholders and improbable due to Fish Creek Setback and Sanitary Sewer location</td>
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<tr>
<td>62-64</td>
<td>Figure 4.5 Central District Framework</td>
<td>Inappropriate road easements indicated connecting Wilshire Street to Chugach Way Remove road designation - Not desired by stakeholders and improbable due to Fish Creek Setback and Sanitary Sewer location</td>
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<td>86</td>
<td>Neighborhood Street Design Alternatives (OS&amp;HP Residential Street Typology)</td>
<td>Incorporate northern design on narrow (30-foot) right of way street designs. Add an additional option 5.2b which incorporates a 2’ concrete edge and a sidewalk on the northern side of 30-foot ROW streets with swales (and winter snow storage) on the south</td>
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<td>97</td>
<td>At-Grade Rail Crossings</td>
<td>Recognize community's informal use of at-grade non-motorized crossing at 34th Avenue.</td>
<td>Include proposal to add at-grade RR crossing at 34th Avenue to discussion of At-Grade Rail Crossings</td>
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<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>Traffic Calming</td>
<td>Recognize role of Minnesota Blvd. contribution to cut through traffic during peak hours.</td>
<td>Incorporate impacts from Minnesota Blvd. in traffic calming planning between Northern Lights Blvd and Tudor Road including street designs to minimize cut through traffic.</td>
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<td>102</td>
<td>Arterial Crossings: Minnesota Drive at 33rd Ave</td>
<td>&quot;this crossing should be implemented only in response to a substantial increase in pedestrian demand.&quot;</td>
<td>Pedestrian Demand cannot be accurately measured at 33rd Avenue and Minnesota because there is no crossing there. It is 40 mph to 50 mph traffic with six lanes. If one was built, it would be enormously popular. Survey households to the West of Minnesota and businesses to the East of Minnesota to determine demand.</td>
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<td>147</td>
<td>Employ Winter City Design Principles</td>
<td>Emphasize and focus non-motorized use of the north side of East-West streets where ROW is limited.</td>
<td>Add brief discussion referencing design of East-West streets with limited ROW (see Reference to Page 86 above) to include non-motorized access on north side of street to maximize southern exposure for snow melt and microclimates.</td>
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