

Glenn Highway / Bragaw Street Interchange

Mountain View and Russian Jack Community Information to the
Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, and the
Municipality of Anchorage

April 10, 2006

Summary:

The Glenn Highway is the major link to Anchorage from the north, with more than 50,000 vehicles passing through the Bragaw intersection toward downtown Anchorage each day. The high demand and bottlenecked condition results in severe congestion, excessive delay, and many rear-end collisions.

ADOT&PF has a positive vision for improving the Bragaw Street / Glenn Highway Interchange to accommodate future traffic levels while also:

- Reconnecting communities that are currently cut in half by the highway,*
- Protecting neighborhoods by eliminating cut-through traffic,*
- Providing walkers and bikers with better paths, and*
- Involving the community early in the design process.*

History:

A community group consisting of residents of Mountain View invited Russian Jack, Airport Heights, and Fairview areas to participate and review options and desired features of this road project.

The list of priorities includes items that reflect our vision for the future of our community; the safety of our bikers, pedestrians, and drivers; the importance of green space and good design; concern regarding noise pollution; and future maintenance of the project.

List of Priorities

1. Pedestrian walkway / non-motorized path along the west side of the overpass, and features such as lighting and safety elements of the walkway, are overwhelmingly a top priority for the group. Specific requests include:

- Elevated pedestrian facility on the bridge
- Bike lane, either separate from the pedestrian walkway, or aligned with the walkway
- Pedestrian path (with and without an aligned bike lane) on the west side of Bragaw (elevated or non-elevated) to be buffered from the parallel route of vehicle traffic
- Pedestrian and bike path (along the west side of the bridge) to be physically separate from automobile traffic, including intersections

Lighting

- Pedestrian and bike path to be well-lit
- Bridge to have distinctive lighting at a pedestrian level

Views

- Protect viewshed to the east (of the Chugach Mountains)
- Landscaped and viewing areas at the pedestrian route, including benches

2. Concern with noise from the interchange. Suggestions included a request for a berm on both sides of Bragaw, south of the Glenn, as a noise control feature; and additional requests included landscaping / trees as an integral part of the noise control to be included with the berm. A few requests included fencing both as noise control and also as through-traffic prevention (outside of designated pedestrian walkways).

3. Third for the interchange design are green space and safety. Safety elements included the complete physical separation of the pedestrian / bike route and auto traffic, and this item was included in number one. Others mentioned a desire for traffic-slowing or –calming elements at crosswalks, minimizing crosswalk length, maximizing crosswalk width, varying the road surface material at crosswalks [~~and eliminating the southbound ramp to westbound Glenn altogether~~].

“Green” items to be considered (as individuals’ first, second, third and fourth priorities) included

- Trees and shrubs
- Environmental-green space design process to include local artists’ input
- Landscaping in areas at the berm, embankment, and all around the overpass
- Water utilities and power drops available along the route for landscape maintenance

4. Embankment features and art were next. Embankment design is requested to have varied texture, color, relief and even bridge ‘screening’ so that the concrete walls are made to ‘disappear’ or have a minimal impact altogether. A request to maximize the length of the bridge, thereby allowing more sunlight into the underpass, was made in tandem with a suggestion to cut back the embankments as much as possible.

Art Suggestions:

- Request to have a public art budget identified
- Request to have (local only?) artists experienced in public installations be members of the design team
- Request to keep in mind the goal of identifying MV as an arts and cultural district
- Request for representation of ethnic groups in MV (this is also under the category of the embankment and pedestrian walkway)
- Request to ask local artists (integral to the design team) to participate not only in the gateway / bridge signature pieces, but also design elements including fence, lighting, embankment, surface material treatment / color, etc.

5. Tunnel design requests were:

- Lighting, maximized and including a light well from the Bragaw surface
- Maximized width with visibility to either end
- Safety of pedestrians through maximum width, as open as possible, maximized lighting

6. As a Winter City, concerns for adequate snow removal space and temporary storage were voiced, and also adequate, “human-scale” lighting, and having pedestrian walkways a distance from vehicle traffic for safety from sliding cars and splashing run-off during break-up season.