

29 November 2018

RE: MOA Project #16-29 --- W. 32nd Avenue & E. 33rd Avenue Upgrades

Attn: Chris Schutte, Anchorage Economic and Community Development Director; Holly Spoth-Torres, Huddle Alaska; Russ Oswald and Melinda Tsu, Project Management and Engineering; Matt Edge, CRW Engineering

Dear Mr. Schutte and West 32nd/33rd Upgrades Project Team,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on this project on behalf of Spenard Community Council. We have several concerns regarding this proposed \$15-\$19 million project whose stated goal is “to enhance safety and accessibility for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists by implementing Complete Streets design standards as recommended by the Anchorage Vision Zero Steering Committee.”

Source:[http://www.crweng.com/assets/images/uploads/projectsites/Appendix_K - Public Involvement.pdf](http://www.crweng.com/assets/images/uploads/projectsites/Appendix_K_-_Public_Involvement.pdf)

It is not clear this project will accomplish the Vision Zero goals, which are stated as follows:

- A community effort and commitment to end traffic deaths and serious injuries on our streets
- A global initiative founded on the belief that death and injury on city streets is unacceptable and preventable
- Data-driven and coordinated approach to designing safer streets, educating the public, evaluating what works, and enforcing the best laws
- Protecting our most vulnerable users

Source:http://www.muni.org/Departments/OCPD/Planning/AMATS/Documents/Vision_Zero/VZ_town%20halls_32916.pdf

Project data, including State DOT collision mapping, clearly shows that fatal and serious accidents involving vehicles and non-motorized users in Midtown happen primarily on the Northern Lights/Benson (NLB) couplet, on Denali Street and on 36th Avenue. These are the arterials which feature the most dense volumes of motorized traffic and also attract the most visits due to popular shopping amenities and office space. How will creating a 32nd/33rd Avenue non-motorized corridor protect non-motorized users traveling these other arterial roadways? What is the incentive for non-motorized users to use 32nd and 33rd when they are bound for destinations on NLB, Denali or 36th? Any investment of this magnitude should assure safety improvements for non-motorized and other vulnerable users in the places where they are currently at risk. Money would be better spent working cooperatively with the State of Alaska to improve safety on NLB and 36th Ave.

In early 2019, the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions Non-Motorized Plan Update is scheduled to be released. How does the 32nd/33rd project fit into the overall non-motorized network in terms of connectivity and prioritization? Design spending for 32nd/33rd should be halted until this updated document is released and citizens of Anchorage can evaluate the relevance of the 32nd/33rd project in the context of an overall non-motorized network.

The most important hub for non-motorized travelers in Midtown is clearly the Loussac Library and the Cuddy Family Midtown Park complex. Any non-motorized investment of the magnitude of 32nd/33rd which does not include the Park complex is a massive oversight. Not only is this public complex the premiere destination in Midtown and an important transportation hub, but the Spenard Community Council and the Anchorage Assembly have identified Cuddy Park as the beginning point for a Fish Creek Daylighting Project and associated East-West non-motorized corridor featuring Greenway Supported Development. Why aren't East-West non-motorized resources being committed to building routes at 36th Avenue or at 40th Avenue which connect to the Loussac-Cuddy complex?

All the current project alternatives face significant continuity problems at the Seward Highway and at Arctic Boulevard. How will users traveling east from Spenard Road cross Arctic Boulevard at 32nd? There is no traffic light or crossing controls imagined in your project design. Do you propose building an expensive separated grade crossing at Arctic to ensure Vision Zero goals? Likewise, this project has no appropriate connectivity on its eastern boundary (Old and New Seward Highway). Project managers have recently added on a trail along the Old Seward Highway frontage (dangerous) to connect non-motorized 32nd/33rd users to 36th Avenue, where data shows vehicle collisions with non-motorized users are significant. Directing non-motorized use from 33rd and 34th toward dense automobile traffic volume at 36th Avenue and the Seward Highway would place non-motorized users in harm's way, contrary to Vision Zero goals. An expensive grade separated crossing taking non-motorized users over or under the Seward Highway puts travelers in the center of the BP Energy Center, once again providing no continued eastbound continuity.

We suggest 36th Avenue or 40th Avenue as the logical corridor to focus non-motorized routing for this area of town. Both avenues connect the Loussac-Cuddy public complex to destinations east and west and provide the most direct continuity between Spenard, Midtown and the U-Med complex. Also developing in this area is a number of proposed Midtown Congestion improvements which potentially create crossings for non-motorized east-west users attempting to span the Seward Highway. Certainly, design for 32nd/33rd should incorporate the findings of a \$330 million revision of the Seward Highway between Dowling and Chester Creek.

While we certainly support safer options for east-west non-motorized connections in Midtown, Spenard and the University Area, this project appears to be prioritized improperly, it lacks continuity with a broader network and it doesn't appear to provide any of the remedies imagined by the Vision Zero policies. We'd be happy to work with the project Team to develop new alternatives, but in the interim please pause design work for this project until such time as all the relevant data and considerations can be included.

Respectfully,

Jay Stange, Spenard Community Council President
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Cc: Assembly Members Eric Croft, Austin Quinn-Davidson, Dick Traini, and Forrest Dunbar; Midtown Community Council; Rogers Park Community Council