

Spenard Community Council Resolution

2022-06 DRAFT

A Resolution on Spenard Road 35% Design

WHEREAS, the Spenard Community Council (“SCC”) is an organization representing the interests of the residents of the Spenard area of Anchorage; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of community councils is to provide a direct and continuing means of participation in local government and local affairs; and

WHEREAS, the 2040 Anchorage Land Use Plan designates Spenard Road as a “neighborhood center” and “main street corridor,” and with overlays for growth-supportive features including “transit-supportive development” and “traditional neighborhood features;” and

WHEREAS, the AMATS Non-Motorized Plan identifies Spenard Road as a priority bicycle network with a separated bikeway in the section from Minnesota Dr. to Benson Blvd., and as a secondary pedestrian network corridor; and

WHEREAS, the Spenard Corridor Plan identifies the transportation projects that interface with land use to meet the vision and overarching goals to make Spenard a vibrant model for the region and business district, and a place that is grounds for experimentation and a place to call home; and

WHEREAS, the Spenard Corridor Plan identifies Spenard Road as a primary non-motorized network and identifies priorities for the Central District of Spenard Road to include enhanced connectivity for non-motorized travel and public transit improvements; and

WHEREAS, Spenard Road is the anchoring roadway that connects our neighborhood and is a foundation for neighborhood identity, and this redesign should prioritize improvements for safety, connectivity, and accessibility within Spenard; and

WHEREAS, the Spenard Road 35% Design Study was released with a preferred alternative, including 3 driving lanes, narrow bicycle lanes, and multi-use pathways;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Spenard Community Council recommends the following improvements to the proposed design to meet the overall goals in the Spenard Corridor Plan (SCP) and for the community:

- **Continue the three-lane alternative for the full section from Minnesota to Benson.** We support a three-lane alternative with a narrow center lane, and this design must extend south of 36th Avenue. A five-lane alternative at Minnesota is unacceptable and is unsafe for non-motorized users where it is most important for them to have inherent safety - at intersections, particularly busy ones, and it removes any non-motorized infrastructure and reduces sidewalks to 4-feet, not meeting ADA standards. This reduction in non-motorized transit infrastructure is in direct opposition to the Spenard Corridor Plan.

- **Reduce the design speed of the project and the posted speed limit to 20-25mph.** SCP Goals 8 and 10 focus on the accommodation and safety of non-motorized transit, and SCP Policy 5.16 (Roadway classification and vehicular speed) calls for the design of the Central and North sections of Spenard Road for low vehicle operation speeds. Without a buffer separating non-motorized travel from the driving lanes, the speed limit reduction is necessary and will improve safety without adding to congestion. Much of this section of the road is deeply curved; in fact the section from West 36th Avenue to Minnesota has been historically known as “Dead Man’s Curve”. There is no possibility of taking the curve out of the road (we are not asking for that), but the sight lines are very short and going at higher speeds will be dangerous no matter what changes happen to the road itself.
- **Reduce the width of driving lanes.** By reducing the speed, the driving lanes can be narrowed, including the center turning lane, to provide more width for non-motorized facilities. An ideal cross section of the street would be 8 foot multi-use paths, a 1.5 foot gutter, 5 foot bike lanes, 11 foot driving lanes and an 11 foot center lane, allowing for a 1.5 foot shoulder on either side. See SCP Policy 5.10.
- **Prioritize design for the ease of use and safety of people walking, biking, and using transit.** SCP Policy 5.6 prioritizes a safe, efficient, and walkable pedestrian system, including excellent sidewalk facilities, enhanced pedestrian crossings, and ADA accessible active transportation routes. Residents who rely on non-motorized and public transit are more vulnerable to injury and death in the event of a collision involving a motor vehicle. Collisions rarely happen when all involved are vigilant and undistracted on a clear day. Studies show that designing a road that takes into account the humanity of all users in inclement conditions and assumes that one or more parties will be distracted or unaware reduces injuries and fatalities.
- **Include 5-foot wide bicycle lanes.** The current design of 4-foot bicycle lanes with a 1.5 foot gutter pan does not make a 5.5-foot bike lane for safe, year-round facility. A winter bike handle bar is about 2 feet wide, making the buffer between vehicles inadequate. By designing the road to a speed of 20-25mph, it is possible to reduce the driving lanes or turning lane to enhance the non-motorized facilities. Without a speed reduction, this design requires a buffer or a separated bicycle facility.
- **Incorporate access to cross streets in the design.** Recent development, such as along Chugach Way and 34th Avenue, and improvements to the non-motorized network along 30th Avenue need to be incorporated into the design based on increased use in these areas. Successful examples of this are along McRae Rd.
- **Include safe and ADA compliant pedestrian crossings between traffic lights.** ADA requirements for pedestrians at crosswalks should be adhered to, such as audible signals for those with hearing impairments. Again, there are the curves which makes it extremely hazardous for people to cross anywhere other than at Benson Blvd. or 36th Avenue. An example in the Municipality is the crosswalk in front of Turnagain Elementary School on Northern Lights Boulevard; a red traffic signal instead of a flashing crosswalk sign alerts drivers to come to a complete stop to allow pedestrians to cross.
- **Integrate public transit into the design.** Spenard is a “Transit Corridor,” so it should include bus turnouts, improvements at transit stops, and ways for passengers to safely cross Spenard Road throughout the corridor to get on and off the bus including but not limited to the crosswalk recommendations listed below. Planning for a future Transit Hub per SCP Policy 5.18 should also be included in this design. Refer also to SCP Policies 2.12, 2.13, 3.20, and 5.1.
- **Winter maintenance must be factored into design.** Spenard Road is a vital connection for residents year-round and snow is a problem for everyone: the Municipality snow removal and maintenance crews, vehicle traffic and especially pedestrians and bicyclists. We do not want to

see snow storage in bicycle lanes or on sidewalks, but instead recommend modeling snow storage in the center turn lane within sections to also support slowing down traffic as has been successful in other cities. Anchorage has done this successfully for years to accommodate Fur Rendezvous activities, proving it can be done within the Municipality.

- **Explain decision on alternatives based on concrete criteria aligned with the Spenard Corridor Plan.** As outlined in these recommendations, the current design appears inconsistent with the goals and policies of the SCP.
- **Improve design with lessons learned from the northern section.** Just because it was done on the northern side does not mean it was done right?

Resolved, this _____ day of _____ 2022.

Spenard Community Council President

Date

Vote: _____ in favor, and _____ opposed.