

NE 5th Street Neighborhood Traffic Plan



NE 5th Street Traffic Committee Meeting #6 Meeting Summary

Date: May 03, 2012

Location: Bellevue City Hall, Room 2E-112

Time: 6:00 – 7:00 PM

Attendees:

Bre Goss, Wilburton resident
Ron Griffin, Wilburton resident
Carolyn Harris, member of the Wilburton Community Association
Carolyn Maxim, Wilburton resident
Pat Sheffels, City of Bellevue Planning Commission
Bob Shay, President of the Wilburton Community Association
Vangie Garcia, City of Bellevue and NE 5th Street Project Manager
Karen Gonzalez, City of Bellevue Transportation
Nancy LaCombe, City of Bellevue
Jon Pascal, Transpo Group
Kristine Edens, EnviroIssues
Kat Ashbeck, EnviroIssues

Committee members not in attendance:

Eric Vargo, Westridge Apartments
Jack McLeod, Bellevue School District
Dan Renn, Wilburton Community
Michael Shovlin, Bellevue Police Department
Mike Remington, Bellevue Fire Department
Briana Bennitt, Three Cedars Waldorf School
Leann Hopwood, Wallace properties
Hal Scott, Wilburton Community
Michael Shovlin, Bellevue Police Department
Mike Remington, Bellevue Fire Department

Welcome and Introductions

Kristine Edens welcomed the attendees, thanked them for attending the meeting and went over a few housekeeping items.

Kristine then reviewed the agenda and the purpose of the meeting, which was to:

- Review the planned improvements to NE 5th Street.

- Discuss the preliminary design for NE 5th Street (Two way restricted through access on NE 5th Street; medians and crosswalk at 124th Avenue NE)
- Discuss the timing of the improvements to NE 5th Street.
- Discuss whether the NE 5th Street improvements should be temporary or permanent.
- Share comments from absent committee members

Update on Wilburton Connections Projects

Nancy LaCombe provided an update regarding recent City Council discussions and recommendations related to other Wilburton Connections Projects relevant to NE 5th Street.

120th Avenue NE

- Funding for Stages 1 and 2 have been approved.
- Design for 120th Ave NE is almost 100% complete.
- Stage 1 construction is scheduled to begin as soon as late 2012 or early 2013.
- Stages 3 and 4 are currently going through the Council process for the 2013-2019 budget cycle.

NE 4th Street:

- The City Council has reaffirmed the preferred alignment for NE 4th Street.
- Both phase 1 and 2 of the 4th Street improvements are now funded.
- The City of Bellevue is working with Best Buy to determine the best solution for their business during and after construction.
- Phase 1 is scheduled for construction early next year and phase 2 would coincide with construction of stage 2 of the 120th Avenue NE improvements.

Comments/Discussion:

- Pat Sheffels asked if the downtown and Midlake post offices are closing. If so, where are they moving to and will the new location bring more traffic to the Wilburton area?
 - Bob Shay said the downtown location is closing, and the Midlake will retain its current location but become retail-only, with no distribution of mail.
 - Pat was relieved that these changes would not likely bring more traffic to the Wilburton area.
 - Nancy added that the move is to a temporary location. USPS wants to move back to downtown Bellevue.
- Ron Griffin asked Nancy if there was a chance that the City would decide to combine the NE 4th and NE 6th improvements, resulting in only one bridge that would connect west Bellevue with neighborhoods east of the BNSF railroad corridor.
 - Nancy replied that there is consideration for that option, but the challenge is NW 6th is planned to be HOV and transit only, which not only offers better service reliability for transit but also improves level of service on other roads. To combine the two and take the car and combine with 6th won't provide the same level of traffic benefits anticipated on 116th Avenue NE, 120 Avenue NE and NE 8th Street.
- What is the timing of the NE 6th Street project?
 - Nancy said this project could be a long time out. This project is estimated to cost around 90 million to construct. The project would be a state funded project, and no state funding is currently allocated.

- This portion of NE 6th Street will also be a potential future HOT lane connection to toll lanes to 520.
- Bre Goss asked where the funding of these projects is coming from, adding that her property taxes keep rising but her property value keeps decreasing.
- Nancy addressed this question by stating that NE 4th Street alignment has come from a combination of federal and other special grant sources, loans for local revitalization and city coffers, which includes state and property taxes.
- Nancy said that she would follow up with Bre regarding how these projects are affecting her property value and taxes.

Planned Improvements to NE 5th Street – Vangie Garcia, City of Bellevue & Jon Pascal, Transpo Group

Kristine introduced the next item to be discussed on the agenda – the planned improvements to NE 5th Street and the design of Option C, two-way restricted through access on NE 5th Street.

Vangie Garcia opened up the discussion by explaining that the City has decided to fund crosswalk improvements across 124th Avenue NE at NE 5th Street. These improvements include curb bulb extensions on the SW corner of 124th Avenue NE and NE 5th Street. Vangie also added that Karen had an idea to include medians on the east end of NE 5th Street. Vangie explained that the medians are traffic calming features that also offer a smoother transition from two lanes to the new single lane design. The medians will be designed to have mountable curbs to allow trucks and busses to roll up on the curb if needed to make a tighter turn. The City is also planning to combine the right and left turn lane from NE 5th Street to 124th Avenue NE, which will make passing through NE 5th Street more time consuming.

Comments/Discussion:

- Bre commented that these improvements should help deter people from entering the area only to use it as a thoroughfare.
- Bre asked if she would be able to turn left out of her driveway.
 - Karen answered that Bre should have no problem getting out of her driveway. Minor changes to the medians may be made to ensure access to Bre’s driveway and for school buses and trucks.
- How will the crosswalks be designed?
 - Vangie answered that the crosswalks will be painted with large white lines and crosswalk signs on both sides.
 - Carolyn Maxim asked whether or not there were plans to use the flashing lights at the crosswalks.
 - Karen responded that these lights have actually become quite expensive for the City to maintain. They have also discovered that flashing lights such as these can cause confusion for drivers.
- How wide will the medians be?
 - Vangie answered the medians will be six feet with low growth shrubs and no trees.
- Bre asked about the cost of upkeep for vegetation in the medians.
 - Karen responded that shrubs are required for environmental benefits.
 - Vangie added that drought resistant plants were chosen to reduce the amount of upkeep.

Jon Pascal from Transpo Group continued the discussion by explaining how the team determined the best placement for the one-way roadway restriction on NE 5th Street – by considering the location of the school district’s driveway and the transition of NE 5th Street from commercial and multi-family to the more residential areas. Advanced placement “Be Prepared To Stop” signs will alert drivers to the new change in design. Stop signs will be placed on either side of the island area with flashers marking the island’s edges. A street light will also be added to an existing pole to illuminate the island at night. If the improvements are installed temporarily, they will be constructed with asphalt initially, with intention of installing full curb and gutter and landscaping for the final installation.

Comments/Discussion

- Can a “Local Access Only” sign be added on NE 5th Street at 120th Avenue NE?
 - Karen responded that because there are commercial properties on NE 5th Street towards 120th, we are limited in whether we can sign the area as only residential. The residential portion of NE 5th Street doesn’t start until after the school.
 - Karen would like to wait and see how the transition goes before making any changes to the plans, including making signage adjustments.
- Robert Shay asked if there was a plan to use metering lights through the one-way area of NE 5th Street.
 - Jon answered that unless there was a demonstrated problem with the design and traffic effects they would not add metered lights.
 - Karen added that they feel comfortable about how the design has been laid out. A warning sign saying “one lane traffic, expect delays” may be added to the roadway plans.
 - Carolyn Maxim said she was happy with the project design as proposed.
 - Pat added that the people in her neighborhood want to have access both ways and this plan looks to accomplish this.

Kristine then asked the group about timing and whether to install the improvements temporarily in the near-term, permanently prior to the completion of Phase 2 of the NE 4th Street project, or both. A temporary option would need to be installed later this summer or early fall along with the installation of the planned medians and crosswalk improvements at 124th Avenue NE. A temporary installation would allow the community to assess the improvements before installation of the permanent structure.

Comments/Discussion

- Ron asked how much more the project would cost if a temporary design was implemented, with a permanent design following.
 - Karen said the temporary installation could be done quite inexpensively. Installing the improvements temporarily and removing them would be much less costly than installing the permanent structures and removing them, if the community decides they do not like the improvements made.
- Carolyn M. asked about the timing and justification for modifying or removing the improvements. Would the temporary structure be removed before neighbors were to experience the impact to traffic with improvements on 120th Avenue NE?
 - Vangie said they would like to see how the neighborhood is feeling about the design, but would only take out the one-way lane if it were causing major accidents or major concerns within the community.
 - Vangie also noted that a decision to remove the temporary installation and/or install the permanent installation would not occur before the completion of the NE 4th Street

Phase 2 improvements, so the neighborhood could experience the full impact of the additional traffic from the Phase 2 improvements.

- Karen suggested that the traffic committee participants continue to actively talk to their neighbors as to why this change is happening, the process through which these improvements were identified, and the improved results that will be seen in the near future.
- Karen added that the neighborhood members would start seeing traffic impacts as soon as the utility work starts on 120th this fall.
- Ron Griffin inquired about the sight problems on 120th and 5th.
 - Vangie responded that the whole intersection will be widened as a part of the 120th Avenue NE Stage 1 improvements, which will improve drivers seeing pedestrians and oncoming traffic.
 - Jon responded that it is likely that intersection will be difficult no matter what actions are taken.
 - Vangie added that until warrants are met to justify a traffic signal or other improvements at the intersection of 120th Avenue NE and NE 5th Street, additional improvements beyond what is already planned as a part of the Stage 1 efforts would not be made.
- Bob commented on a problem with drainage lines recently installed from an office complex on 120th, which drain right into the sidewalk.
 - Vangie stated that they would look into this issue.
- Kristine asked for comments from absent committee members related to the temporary and/or permanent installation.
 - Vangie noted that she received comments from Dan Renn, Eric Vargo, Jack McLeod and Leann Hopwood. Dan and Eric were supportive of the temporary installation. Jack McLeod would prefer to see any installation delayed.
- Bre would like to see the temporary structure constructed as soon as possible, adding that she and other traffic committee members can share what is happening with their neighbors.
- Karen added that although this is the last scheduled meeting, the group may want to meet one more time before the improvements are permanently installed and/or to consider public input on the temporary installation.

Kristine confirmed with the group that the committee was supportive of the City temporarily installing improvements to NE 5th Street prior to installing the permanent improvements. Kristine also confirmed with the group that the temporary installation would occur during the fall of 2012, along with the installation of the crosswalk improvements and medians at the intersection of NE 5th Street and 124th, and that the permanent installation would occur prior to or in parallel with the completion of NE 4th Street, Phase 2.

All present at the meeting agreed and noted that comments from absent committee members also seemed to support this decision.

Next Steps and Action Items

Kristine directed the group to next steps and future action items.

- The City will check on the percentage of property tax used for the NE 4th Street alignments.

- The City will check with the school district regarding the turning radius of buses in order to make any adjustments to the design of the new medians at 124th Avenue NE.
- The City will check with King County Metro and the school district regarding how bus stop locations may be affected by the improvements planned at 124th Avenue NE and NE 5th Street.
- The traffic committee members committed to keeping the conversation regarding the intent of the temporary vs. permanent improvement on NE 5th Street in the Wilburton Community Association Newsletter newsletters, as an announcement at the annual picnic and in one-on-one discussions with other neighbors.
- The City will provide the Wilburton Community Association with a set of drawings to share at the annual picnic, anticipated for July 2012.
- The City will discuss spreading the word about the temporary and planned permanent installation of improvements on NE 5th Street as well – via a project website update, City blog post, article in a future Wilburton connections newsletter, updated on-site signage and through a pre-construction flyer to nearby residents and businesses.
- The City will loop back with and possibly convene the traffic committee again if any modifications are being requested to the improvements on NE 5th Street, or if there is push back on the installation of the permanent improvements, based on community input.
- The City will check on the drainage pipe on 120th.

The committee agreed to these next steps. The City thanked the committee members for their time and attendance.

Adjourned at 7:00 PM