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# PALMER WASILLA HIGHWAY EASTERN TERMINUS

## Citizen's Advisory Committee Meeting Summary

April 29, 2010

Palmer City Hall

4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

### Next meeting dates:

*Palmer City Council Presentation – May 11, 2010*

*Mat Su Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) and Mat-Su Assembly – TBD*

*Next CAC – Design Kick Off - September*

### City Council Debrief

For the most part, the CAC members who attended the Council meeting felt it went well but there was an uncertainty about whether the Council would pass the resolution in support of Alternative B. There was some discussion about Jeff Johnson attending the Council, Planning and Zoning and the Chamber of Commerce meetings and not supporting the Alternative. Lorie also indicated that Council members have told her they may not support it. The importance of the CAC being united in their message was discussed.

When asked how the CAC was still feeling about Alternative B, there was general consensus still in support of Alternative B.

### CAC Discussion

- Dave indicated he would not have supported Alternative B if he had been at the last meeting. He believes the CAC has boxed the engineers in too much by putting restrictions on the project such as “no improvements” east of Cobb and that the decisions are not in the best interest of Palmer. *A preferred alternative does not mean there cannot be changes as the project moves forward. There are often tweaks to the alternative to better address design issues and community concerns. ADOT has committed to keeping the CAC involved through design. Meetings would typically be at key milestones or other decision points – 35% design, 65% design, 95% design.*
- CAC members indicated again that not everyone likes every part of the Alternative but it is a compromise that was achieved through a lot of hard work to balance all the diverse interests. It is also about approving a route and where the money should be spent. The lanes, intersection configurations, and signals still have to be worked out.
- Lorie stated that she was planning on attending the next City Council meeting to discuss the traffic projections and medians. The request is that the City Council adds language to the resolution stating “no medians” will be included as part of the project. Also enough right-of-way should be acquired so that Dogwood can be expanded to 4 lanes in the future. Lorie indicated that the Council would be more willing to support the project with this language.
  - Whether to install a median or not is a safety issue and governed by National Standards. Engineers assume a liability when they sign drawings and cannot be held to a standard that says no medians if it is not in the best interest of public safety.
  - Medians can also provide an opportunity for landscaping and gateways into Palmer. Should be cautious about a blanket statement that medians are unacceptable as any part of the project.
  - The real concern is that access to businesses needs to be maintained.

## Resolution Amendments

The following amendments to the resolution were approved unanimously.

- Frontage business access should be maintained to the extent practicable subject to safety requirements and good engineering practices.
- Acquire sufficient right-of-way for reasonable future expansion of roadways.

Concern was expressed that the CAC was never told about Evergreen east of Cobb going down to 3 lanes. It should be 5 lanes. Utilities could also be undergrounded giving property owners more useable land. *The intersection diagrams are not the actual design of the facilities. They are graphics to show the minimum number of lanes required to meet a certain level of service, they are not “mandating” that Evergreen go down to 3 lanes. They do not show median locations. The configuration of the intersections will be done during design and will be brought to the CAC for comment.*

## Guest Speaker

Residents from Daron Drive are concerned about ingress and egress to the neighborhood. The neighborhood is south of McDonalds and the new Safeway store off the PWH. Based on the plans they have seen, they are concerned they would have to cut through the Safeway parking lot because Ellen may become a right turn only. Additionally the neighborhood streets are narrow and will not have capacity to handle cut through traffic from the McDonalds and the new Safeway development. Exacerbating the cut-through problem, is the fact that drivers are not stopping for the existing stop sign creating a safety issue. The city and police are already aware of this problem.

*Based on what is known now, Safeway will be required to construct a dedicated public roadway to intersection with Ellen. There will be a new traffic signal at its intersection with the PWH. Given that both of these projects are just beginning design, it is good that the issue has been brought to our attention and the CAC and ADOT will take a close look at the situation. (Contact information was obtained to keep the residents informed.)*

## Funding (All numbers approximate and rounded to the nearest \$100,000!)

General Funding from Legislature

- 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 – Received \$35.4 million to address traffic safety. A portion of this funding (\$17.5 million) has been spent (intersection redesign and new signals (already installed) and corridor studies).
- This left \$18 million.
  - Of this, \$700,000 was spent for surveying the Palmer Wasilla Highway corridor, starting a cultural resources study, and for this process including traffic modeling and design support for the CAC process.
  - \$2.5 million of the money is dedicated for the design of the PWH improvements.
  - \$15 to 15.5 million remains for right-of-way acquisition, utility relocations, and construction of the improvements.

Even with the Palmer Couplet project, it has always been stated that an additional \$20 million would be requested from the Legislature. It was an expectation that they would fund it but never a certainty. At this time they have made no additional appropriations to this project.

To construct Alternative B in its entirety, the estimated cost is about \$39 million. Additional funds are still required from the legislature. There is a risk that the legislature will not provide the additional \$20 million. Jim has been thinking about how to package this project to get the most benefit for the money.

There may be a way to Phase Alternative B and take advantage of the Glenn Highway project and the Borough bond money from the Dogwood Project.

## The Glenn Highway Project

It already includes reconstruction of the intersections: Inner Springer Loop, Dogwood, PWH, and Arctic. Work is scheduled to begin at Arctic and move south.

- a. This is a federally funded project and included in the STIP.
- b. Design is funded - 2011
- c. ROW acquisition if funded for 2011 -2012

The federal process is slower. It takes about 2 to 3 years longer than a state funded project. There is a risk that intersection improvements done as part of our project, could have to be torn up in 3 years.

Let the Glenn Highway project construct the intersections and use the PWH available funds to:

- 5 lane PWH to Felton
- Construct Felton to Dogwood
- Construct Dogwood to the Glenn
  - Look at South Industrial Way and the signal at Denali but may have to get approval from Legislature as it may not directly benefit the PWH/Glenn congestion
- The Mat Su requires a state match to use the bond money they have for Dogwood. The PWH funds could be the state match stretching available funding a little farther.
- Let the Glenn project construct the intersections.

Phase 2 would include the intersections on the Glenn. Funding would still be required from legislature.

#### **Advantages to this approach**

- State funded projects are less expensive than the Federal process and move more quickly.
- More likely to get support from Legislature for Glenn Highway improvements because the Glenn is a part of the National Highway System and funding tends to be more stable for these roads.
- Signals could be added through a separate funding source called the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP).
- Constructing Felton and Dogwood first would be sort of a trial test to see how much traffic changes.

#### **Discussion**

- What about Evergreen – is it in Phase 1? It needs to happen and what if funding doesn't come through for Phase 2?
- Remember when this process first started and CAC members indicated there was "no problem" on Evergreen and now the CAC members are concerned the problem won't get addressed in Phase 1.
- How would ROW acquisition work? *ROW acquisition would likely overlap between the two projects.*
- What about the CAC's work? Is there a risk that the Glenn project would ignore it? *Jim is the also the project manager for the Glenn and envisions that at least some members of this CAC will continue to work on that project as well.*

This is just a food for thought. All of Alternative B would be taken to 35% design and then a decision can be made about the phasing.

#### **Mat Su Transportation Advisory Board and Assembly**

Alex, Jack, and Al were selected as the spokespersons for the Mat Su Transportation Advisory Board and Assembly presentation. The same resolution submitted to the City will be used. All CAC members were encouraged to attend to show support.

## Other

Parking loss on Dogwood to the east is a growing concern. Parking will have to be addressed during design.

### **FUTURE MEETING DATES**

Palmer City Council - May 11, 2010

Mat Su Assembly - TBD

Next CAC Design Kick Off – September

Note: If the resolution fails at the City Council or Assembly, a CAC meeting will be scheduled as soon as possible.

### **PARKING LOT (SUMMARY OF ALL MEETINGS)**

The parking lot is for items that are likely outside the scope of discussion. They will be addressed as time permits.

- ~~Future of Glenn Highway through Palmer. What are ADOT's plans? Addressed Dec 10, 2009~~
- Walkway from Palmer to Fairgrounds
- ~~Frontage Road with limited access along west side of Palmer Wasilla Highway (Discussed during alternative development)~~