

DRAFT FAIRVIEW COMMUNITY COUNCIL COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED HIGHWAY 2 HIGHWAY PROJECT

AUGUST 2009

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the conceptual alternatives for the proposed Highway to Highway connection project that were introduced during public scoping meetings on May 27th-30th, 2009. Thank you as well for accommodating our busy schedules by extending the deadline to comment. Your continued cooperation throughout the EIS scoping process is appreciated.

Fairview is committed to securing a vibrant future for the neighborhood. Past and current planning efforts are being undertaken to ensure that future development and growth will positively impact our neighborhood. These currently include our Draft Neighborhood Plan and Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy. We would like to use this opportunity to reiterate the Council's position of tentative acceptance of the proposed Highway to Highway project, with an understanding that the project will be a mechanism to address the severe and deleterious consequences of past changes that occurred along the Gambell-Ingra corridor.

Firstly regarding the proposed alignments that would directly impact the community's vision for a vibrant and economically viable neighborhood: The Hyder alignment as proposed in Anchorage's adopted *Long Range Transportation Plan* as a "cut and cover" design, is more appropriate than the Cordova or Orca alternatives as depicted in scoping documents. These streets serve an important residential function, and altering the nature of these streets in such a severe manner would be inappropriate considering the character and functionality of our neighborhood.

The Council strongly supports consideration of enhanced transit (Scenario B) for the Hyder alignment. In Fairview 30% of the population does not own a vehicle, and transportation and mobility is an issue of concern for pedestrians, bicyclists, seniors, the disabled, and any other traveler not utilizing a private automobile. The Council also strongly supports the narrowing of streets on the existing Seward-Glenn arterial connection for the following reasons:

- Ingra Street was a residential street
- Gambell Street functioned as the Main Street
- Construction of the New Seward Highway connection concentrated regional trips along Gambell Street
- Increasing regional trip volumes led to construction of the Gambell/Ingra couplet
- There was no change in land use zoning when traffic changes were made
- Residential properties negatively impacted by increased traffic volumes
- Commercial properties impacted as new regional functional designation of Gambell Street as regional corridor led to systematic elimination of direct access by the Department of Transportation
- Business development became more difficult due to loss of direct access. Indirect access mandated multiple lots and re-platting to be competitive.
- Transportation decisions negatively impacted the residential and commercial vitality of the Fairview community

As conceptual alternatives are narrowed to a fewer number of alternatives for more technical study, the Fairview Community wishes to ensure that any alternative studied will benefit our community. Our draft neighborhood plan land use map calls for higher densities to facilitate increased mixed-use infill development and to support transit. It is our understanding that traffic volumes are projected to exceed the capacity of the couplet, and the proposed solution is new controlled access facility focused solely on moving regional traffic. If the Hyder corridor is considered for further study, it is the Council's firm position that:

- The Highway to Highway project should consider the issue of land use impact as alternatives choices are narrowed for further consideration;
- Our desire is see original community integrity restored
- Ingra Street should be returned to a residential emphasis between 9th and 14th
- Gambell Street returned to Main Street emphasis along entire corridor

Unanswered questions which should be addressed through the H2H scoping process:

- What is the historical record regarding the impacts of increased traffic through the predominately low-income neighborhood of Fairview
- What is the economic value of these impacts
- What are the likely impacts (direct, indirect and cumulative) of converting the couplet into a controlled access facility
- What mitigating actions should be considered to address all relevant significant impacts to the neighborhood
- Are the FHWA sanctioned mitigating actions sufficient to meet the Goals and Values identified by Anchorage 2020, the LRTP and the draft Fairview Community Plan

To reiterate, it is the Council's position that any alternative for the proposed Highway to Highway project should serve to further the community's vision for the neighborhood if this project is to continue to enjoy the support of the Council. The vision for Fairview as identified in past public workshops and council meetings is:

- Protect the residential properties along Ingra Street. No negative impacts to residential properties on eastern edge.
- Restore the Main Street character of Gambell Street. Specific actions to include:
 - Establish transit-oriented, pedestrian-friendly corridor
 - Control vehicles by building new structured parking facilities - one on north end and one on south end of corridor.
 - Establish robust public transit system within the area so that visitors and residents have viable alternative to the personal vehicle
 - Public transit options could be: increased fixed route service, new downtown street trolley system, new personal rapid transit network
 - Reduce minimum off-street parking requirements and adopt Central Business District approach (expand Parking Authority to Fairview to operate FHWA funded structured parking facilities.

- Examine options for conversion of Gambell and Ingra Streets (widened sidewalks, landscaping, downtown setbacks and parking requirements, mixed-use development, etc.)
- Provide improved pedestrian and business linkages (restaurants, for example) to Sports Complex on South end of corridor
- Establish Form-Based Code Overlay Zone to provide more guidance on building form
- Integrate a more robust housing component in the project. Establish a partnership between transportation and housing
- Strongly encourage mixed-used development, especially along the Gambell Street, with commercial on ground floor, built to property line with large percentage of glass frontage at ground level, sidewalk cafes with office uses on second level. Residential uses could occur on second level.
- Provide incentives for higher density (taller buildings) in exchange for winter city amenities
- Establish stronger linkage with urban core of Central Business District
- Maximize the amount of square footage cover above the controlled access freeway
- Southernmost cover should allow mixed-used development, and form core of the neighborhood's community center
- Middle and northernmost covers should focus on green-space to match up with increased residential densities
- Separated regional trail connection should be integrated into the project. Connect Ship Creek Trail and Chester Creek Trail to establish, along with the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, a bike/ski/pedestrian beltway around the urban center.

We have enjoyed the support and participation of project staff and interested officials. We sincerely hope that staff will consider the Council's concerns as the environmental scoping process continues. We look forward to continuing to provide useful information to assist staff in the consideration and development of an alternative that will at once provide a solution to our region's transportation needs while ensuring positive outcomes for the Fairview community.