

Fairview Loop Rehabilitation Project No. 51774

Meeting Notes

Prepared by project team and Fairview Safety Committee

SUBJECT: Fairview Loop Project
PROJECT NO.: B&A 3908.05
GROUP: Fairview Safety Committee
DATE: July 28, 2010
TIME: 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.
LOCATION: Home of Sabrina Shaw, 4988 Danielle Street
MEETING OUTREACH: Committee notice to members, email to project team
MEETING ATTENDANCE: See below
MEETING MATERIALS: Aerial photo overlays for corridor, Crash data, Fact Sheet, comment sheets from the July 17, 2010 public meeting
STAFF PRESENT: ADOT&PF: Jim Amundsen
Brooks & Associates: Anne Brooks

MEETING INFORMATION:

The project team (Jim Amundsen, Anne Brooks) and committee members were welcomed to the Shaw home where the group gathered around the dining room table. An aerial photo showing the alignment was laid out cross the table to use for reference and discussion.

The Fairview Safety Committee provided a list of questions they wanted the project team to address. Discussion began with working through the questions. At times, the discussion veered off in other directions, however, for these notes, questions and answers are first, followed by additional questions and comments received.

What phases of the design process have been completed to date? The team has acquired survey data including topography, front and back property corners, and location of utilities.

Why did you survey all property corners? The survey picked up all lot corners because it very important to know where the state owned road right of way exists. This is important because the state has a legal obligation to make sure it has the ownership or legal easements for the property the road will be constructed on. The team's desired outcome is an updated plat for Fairview Loop.

What decisions have been made, what decisions are about to be made, and what is the present status of design? As of July 28, 2010, the team has completed a draft "3-R" analysis. The 3-R's stand for Resurfacing, Restoration and Rehabilitation. The analysis looks at historical crash data (1997 through 2007) and the geometry of the road to determine locations where changes could be made to improve the safety of the road.

The 3-R Analysis led to the decision to develop the design based on a cross-section that includes two 11-foot travel lanes with 4-foot shoulders and a separated multi-use pathway for the entire length of the corridor. This is a change from the existing condition that includes no shoulder and two 12-foot travel lanes. As stated by DOT during the meeting, Fairview Loop's "existing condition" is two 11-foot lanes not 12. The committee pointed out that the current 11' width does little to calm traffic. Since Mr. Amundsen had pointed out that the scope of the project was the "Legislature's intent" and could not be changed to meet requests from the committee, members questioned the DOT&PF decision to make changes to the "3R" scope of the project, which, as far as we understood, did not include 4' shoulders.

The next design step is to take this cross-section and apply it to the corridor. This work involves fitting the cross section in three dimensions and seeing where and if changes need to be made to accommodate it. For example, in some areas, it might not be possible for the pathway to be separated from the road because of a hill or steep ravine. The outcome of this step is what the project team calls "line and grade" design.

Why 4-foot shoulders? The 4-foot shoulders address the run-off-the-road crashes occurring along the corridor. Committee members discussed run-off-the-road accidents not caused by lack of 4' paved shoulders nor would have been prevented by 4' paved shoulders. Committee members expressed the point that high speed on curves, drag racing, drunk driving has been shown to be the initial cause of run-off-the-road accidents as well as snow drifts from the airstrip near Davis. DOT&PF also pointed to the need for trucks to have bigger turning radius and off-tracking space for rear wheels. The concern was expressed that accommodating big trucks (semi's) would increase their use of the road which is inconsistent with a residential area on a rural collector with many single family access points. A member questioned if the road was being designed for Usibelli trucks to get to the port. We were told to take that up with Usibelli.

What features have been included in the design as a result of previously stated concerns? The often-requested multi-use pathway is included in the design. Shoulders are included in the design to address run-off-the road crashes and requests voiced at public meetings to include a refuge for vehicle breakdowns and bus pullouts.

Committee questioned the need for shoulders to be paved for 4' to facilitate vehicle breakdowns. Unpaved shoulders provide for this need in most of the state. [As to bus pullouts, Mat-Su Borough school transportation department confirmed that, for student safety, school buses are required not to use shoulders but to stay in the travel corridor when loading and discharging passengers. The question of traffic lining up behind buses is now addressed by a number of pull off areas buses now use and by buses periodically leaving the road to enter subdivisions. The use of 4' paved shoulder would still leave the bus substantially in the right-of-way causing passing traffic to enter on-coming lanes which is exactly what they do now.] 4' shoulders are excessive for this class of road and will have the opposite effect of traffic calming and encourage unsafe pedestrian use. If the shoulder is meant for errant automobiles and trucks swinging wide on corners, the paved shoulders are an unsafe, attractive nuisance for pedestrians. No local arterials have such a wide shoulder. Why would a rural collector incorporate such a design?

When will the traffic study be completed? The draft is complete and being reviewed by DOT traffic engineering staff and others. Once this review is complete, and the comments from staff and the public are incorporated in the study, it will be posted to the project web site. The team anticipates this to occur by mid-September.

Does the entire corridor need repaving? Which portions do not?

The team does not have a good answer to this question at this time. The safety committee discussed the areas of Fairview that received new paving in the last several years. They wanted to know if the work could be phased so that these new areas of paving would not be completed until necessary. The team indicated that it would be looking at the entire corridor and would make recommendations to improve the pavement. Sometimes the maintenance paving, which is the type that recently occurred, does not address problems in the subsurface that lead to pavement deterioration. The project would be considering these areas in addition to cross-section changes where appropriate. The team could not promise that the recently paved areas be treated differently because they might be areas where safety-driven improvements are needed. The committee's point was that recently improved areas are now serviceable and those areas could wait until safety driven improvements are made for pedestrians. This would free up funding for increased bike path mileage.

Is provision for a bike path included in the scope of the design for the full length of the corridor? If not, where is it absent, and why can it not be included?

Yes, a multi-use pathway is being considered for the full length of Fairview Loop. Just keep in mind that it is highly likely that the existing funding will not be sufficient for full construction of the pathway.

The team asked the committee for some feedback on the portion of the multi-use pathway that they would desire to be constructed first (with the \$4.5 million received from the legislature in 2010). The safety committee thought Patty Drive to Edlund Road would be a good place to start because walking conditions in this area are really poor. Committee members noted that they formed focused on safety for children. The pathway section near the school remains their priority. The committee pointed out that the #1 priority on the Mat-Su Borough CIP list is a Fairview Loop multi-use trail from M4.8 to M9.2 which would incorporate the school, church and Hanson Park as well as the section line right angle turn intersections at both Patty, Rod and Fairview Loop and Lupine, Hayfield and Fairview Loop.

Committee members expressed a concern that the DOT would shift the road in such a way that the cost of the pathway would be inordinately high.

What speed limits are planned for the corridor, in what portions? What range of speed limits is available, and what factors will determine the chosen limit(s)?

The posted speed limit is 50 miles per hour and will remain. The committee questioned why the speed limit would not be lowered to a rate more consistent with other rural collectors. The committee was unclear as to the response other than it was Mr. Amundsen's call.

The speed study indicated that users are driving the road going 55 to 60 miles per hour. The design speed is determined by identifying the 85th percentile speed from the speed study. In this case, the design speed will be 55-60 miles per hour. This road is a rural collector road and the posted speed is consistent with the road classification. The 85th percentile speed was identified as 55 to 65 miles per hour. The 65mph speed was identified as the target speed for road improvements.

The committee voiced concerns for the high design speed and some felt this meant “we were designing for the law breakers.” The 50 mph speed limit indicates a state policy that 50mph should be a MAXIMUM on a road of this class (rural collector). The fact that drivers are routinely EXCEEDING this speed indicates that CALMING MEASURES are in fact appropriate.

They wanted to understand why Seward Meridian was signed at 35 mph and why Fireweed Lane (the frontage road) is posted at 45 mph. The committee’s intent was to point out that Fairview Loop’s posted speed is inconsistent with other rural collector’s and with roads that have high population density along some portions of the road. Jim remarked that he didn’t want two different posted speed limits. Jim indicated that portion of Seward Meridian is within the City of Wasilla and is thus maybe under Wasilla jurisdiction for speed limits. Jim also indicated Fireweed’s 45 mph speed limit is set to be consistent with other frontage roads.

The team explained that design guidance requires the team to design for current users and current conditions. The committee reiterated their desire to “slow the traffic on Fairview Loop.” The committee wanted the design team to look at the speed study and the number of access points. The committee felt that because there were lots of accesses onto the road, traffic speeds should be lower. They also felt that slower speeds would preserve the character of the road. They felt that designing for higher speeds would result in more people driving at higher speeds – a “self fulfilling prophecy.” The committee also pointed out that higher speed accidents are more deadly.

What traffic calming features are being considered or have been included in the design? Why are/were they chosen? Where are they located?

The discussion on speeds continued and moved into the area of traffic calming with committee members asking what physical features would slow traffic. The committee wanted to design things into the project to slow traffic. They indicated the speeding on the road increases on weekends and often involves kids. Jim mentioned 3 or 4-way stops at several locations, like the 90-degree curves, would slow traffic. The narrower, 11-foot lanes will slow traffic and other elements could also slow traffic. The design team has not yet determined what traffic calming to include in the design since the design is just getting underway. Once the line and grade work is done, the team will have a better idea of what elements could be included.

What additional traffic calming options are available? What traffic calming options are unavailable, and why are they unavailable?

Anne provided the group with some Web references to Federal Highway Administration traffic calming information. Jim indicated that the team hadn’t identified all the potential tools that could be incorporated to slow traffic on Fairview Loop and that if the committee had specific

thoughts after driving the corridor and looking over materials, to please pass them on to the design team. Someone mentioned roundabouts as a traffic calming element. Others expressed their dislike of them.

Can the Project Engineer keep the Fairview Loop Road Rehabilitation Committee informed of the progress and decisions affecting the project at a regularly monthly meeting?

The team discussed the project schedule. The team is just now getting started with development of line and grade design. The team anticipated having more information to share in the fall and expressed a hope to return to the committee with more detailed information. This said, the group agreed the team would come back with the line and grade design and sit down with the committee. No firm date was set.

Is there an exemption for motorized wheelchair users that allows them to be on the multi-use pathway? The team doesn't know the citation exactly, but believes that they are exempt from non-motorized use regulation.

Would you consider gravel shoulders rather than paved shoulders? This would slow drivers and provide the area for run off the road. Jim indicated that this would be something he would consider. **NOTE: AFTER REVIEWING THE COMMITTEE COMMENTS WITH THE CENTRAL REGION HIGHWAY DESIGN CHIEF, THE DOT WOULD NOT CONSIDER UNPAVED SHOULDERS FOR FAIRVIEW BECAUSE THEY ARE DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN AND CREATE OTHER SAFETY PROBLEMS, SUCH AS AN ABRUPT EDGE THAT MAY PULL A DRIVER OFF THE ROAD.** The committee also discussed partially paved shoulders of 2' as used on other rural collectors.

Additional Comments Noted:

Your approach on the crash data evaluation and use of 4-foot shoulders just designs the roads for the drunks and speeders. What are the numbers of crashes related to driving under the influence and speeding? Also on this topic it was pointed out that previous improvements (making the right angle corners rounded) resulted in higher speeds. We suggested making corners more abrupt requiring a stop. That would increase safety by slowing traffic and eliminating cars taking corners too fast where most of the incidences are occurring.

Are there any rumble strips I the plans?

No. Rumble strips are typically not used in residential areas because of the noise associated with them.

We want to slow traffic.

We want you to reframe the accident work and look at more current data.

We don't want to turn Fairview Loop in to a by-pass for Knik-Goose Bay Road

Increasing policing of the road would be a goal of this committee.

People living on the road want a quiet pastoral area.

They want to know what they can affect.

We oppose 4' paved shoulders.

The committee members thanked Jim and Anne for their willingness to sit down and discuss their concerns. They asked that the team consider the goals in the State Transportation Plan as they related to Fairview Loop – specifically the 2nd goal in the plan that considers the safety of the motorist and non-motorist alike; goals related to the quality of life; and goals regarding approval of the community.

Related documents on file: Sign in Sheet, Handouts, Meeting graphics