



Agenda Item:

38

COUNCIL COMMUNICATION City Manager's Office

GENERAL INFORMATION

Agenda Date: 11/22/04
04-592

Communication No.:

Agenda Item Type: Resolution
No.:

Roll Call

Submitted by: Jeb E. Brewer, P.E., City Engineer

SUBJECT—

Approval of Contract With Center for Transportation Research and Education at Iowa State University for Two-Way Street Study in Court Avenue District.

SYNOPSIS—

In conjunction with substantial redevelopment that is occurring and proposed in the Court Avenue District, the City has received numerous requests to convert several streets to two-way traffic. Staff has negotiated a proposed contract with the Center for Transportation Research and Education (CTRE) at Iowa State University to assist City staff in completing a review and analysis of three downtown roadways from one to two-way control: Court Avenue from 2nd Avenue to 5th Avenue; 2nd Avenue from Court Avenue to M. L. King, Jr. Parkway; and 3rd Street from Court Avenue to M. L. King, Jr. Parkway.

The study will identify the anticipated impacts to traffic flow, traffic circulation, railroad crossings, parking, etc., and will also identify the necessary modifications and preliminary cost estimate for traffic signs, signals, and pavement markings if these streets are converted. This study will work through a project steering committee including affected stakeholders and will be completed within four months.

FISCAL IMPACT—

The cost of the contract with CTRE is \$24,937. The Downtown Community Alliance has committed to contributing one-half of the cost of this study. The City portion of the study is provided in the Capital Improvements Program under the City-Wide Neighborhood Traffic Control Program, Project STR131.

RECOMMENDATION—

Approval

BACKGROUND—

The City of Des Moines has received requests to change downtown streets from one-way to two-way operation to improve traffic circulation and access to the adjoining businesses. These requests follow a national trend where other cities are studying and converting some of their one-way downtown streets to two-way operation. Des Moines has recently converted several streets, including East Locust Street from 2nd Avenue to E. 7th Street; 5th Avenue from Grand Avenue to I-235; Watson Powell Jr. Way from 2nd Avenue to 6th Avenue; Park Street from 2nd Avenue to 6th Avenue; and 4th Street from Grand Avenue to Park Street. Typically, one-way streets provide greater capacity, more parking opportunities and certain safety benefits, but create some access and circulation concerns, as well as being more difficult for unfamiliar drivers to find a direct route to their destination. A decision to convert a street from one-way to two-way usually includes an analysis of traffic and parking conditions to determine whether the two-way street will continue to meet the demands of existing and future traffic volumes and, of greater importance, provide a high level of safety to both pedestrians and motorists.

In conjunction with substantial redevelopment that is occurring and proposed in the Court Avenue District, the City has received numerous requests to convert several streets to two-way traffic. Because of the existing heavy workload involving traffic controls for major construction projects, including I-235, City staff does not have available staff resources to complete the traffic analysis in a timely manner. Staff is also looking for creative ways to both minimize the costs associated with a traditional consultant study and provide a broad-based, “neutral” perspective on this issue. Staff has negotiated a proposed contract with the Center for Transportation Research and Education at Iowa State University to assist City staff in completing a review and analysis of three downtown roadways from one to two-way control: Court Avenue from 2nd Avenue to 5th Avenue; 2nd Avenue from Court Avenue to M. L. King, Jr. Parkway; and 3rd Street from Court Avenue to M. L. King, Jr. Parkway.

This subject is of significant research interest at CTRE, based upon the comments and discussions conducted statewide where other cities are faced with a similar dilemma. CTRE has been in discussions with the Safety Office within the Iowa Department of Transportation about developing a statewide research study that would provide guidance in the evaluation and implementation of such conversions of one-way streets to two-way traffic. This research will also assist in the decision making process when considering implementing and maintaining converted roadways. CTRE anticipates that this project would be initiated in late 2005 and that it would include case studies from larger Iowa communities such as Waterloo, Cedar Rapids, and

also high growth areas with one-way streets such as Iowa City. This research effort would also provide guidelines for selecting candidate locations for converting existing one-way control where there might not be an active request but where a City might want to develop a candidate list for safety, economic, or efficiency reasons.

The City of Des Moines project would allow the case study work to begin and would start the process of developing guidelines, outlining considerations, and impacts to traffic lanes, parking, operations, circulation, safety, emergency response, and all other potential issues. In an effort to minimize costs, City staff will assist CTRE in collecting and mapping much of the information needed. CTRE will also coordinate with City staff and selected stakeholders to work through the decision process and to ensure the long-term safe and efficient operations for these three study corridors under consideration.

As provided in the scope of services of the contract, CTRE will: 1) complete a literature review of published information on similar conversions, as well as recent City of Des Moines conversions, and prepare a technical memorandum documenting the findings; 2) work with City staff to collect traffic, parking and other field condition information, including conditions during special events; and 3) analyze travel patterns and traffic operations, as well as roadway and railroad conditions, and prepare a report summarizing the findings of the study. This study will work through a project steering committee including affected stakeholders, and will be completed within four months. At no cost to this project, CTRE will also summarize the key aspects and issues determined in this study and format this information consistent with a larger statewide review of one-way to two-way street conversions.