



# Council Communication

Office of the City Manager

Date

March 10, 2008

Agenda Item No. 70  
Roll Call No. 08-  
Communication No. 08-115  
Submitted by: **Jeb E. Brewer, P.E.**  
City Engineer

## AGENDA HEADING:

Approval of East Indianola Avenue Widening – SE 14<sup>th</sup> Street to Army Post Road Design Concept from Public Input Meeting.

## SYNOPSIS:

At its December 17, 2007 meeting, the City Council heard concerns from a number of residents regarding the bike trail proposed to be included along the west side of Indianola Avenue as part of the reconstruction of Indianola Avenue from SE 14<sup>th</sup> Street to Army Post Road. Council directed that City staff conduct a public meeting to provide more information to residents and receive input concerning the pedestrian and bicycle accommodations planned for the reconstruction. This public meeting was held January 31, 2008, at Weeks Middle School.

Council also directed that City staff coordinate the construction schedule with Jackson Elementary School renovations, and expand public notices to include all residents who received the Environmental Impact Statements. Notice of the public meeting was sent to an expanded list of residents, businesses and other interested parties, and the meeting was well attended.

Following the public meeting, staff from Engineering, Traffic and Transportation, Parks and Recreation and Snyder & Associates have met to consider how to incorporate the input from the public meeting, along with previous public input from the corridor and environmental studies, into a recommendation for the “best” alternative. The recommended alternative provides safe accommodations for the most users, but minimizes the impacts to adjacent property owners by limiting the total right-of-way widths. The design team also had an initial meeting with the School District facilities design team, to consider both the scheduling of the roadway project with the Jackson School renovations as well as integrating design features between the school site and the roadway to accommodate school pedestrians, passenger loading and bus loading needs. The two design teams will continue to meet on a regular basis until a final design and schedule are developed.

## FISCAL IMPACT:

Amount: The recommended alternative can be included in the existing overall project budget for design, right-of-way acquisition and construction (\$9.2 million for the recommended 2008-09/2013-14 CIP, with an additional \$4.4 million beyond the six-year period).

Funding Source: Recommended 2008-09/2013-14 Capital Improvements Program, East Indianola Avenue Widening – S.E. 14<sup>th</sup> to Army Post Road, STR213.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

Indianola Avenue from E. Army Post Road north to SE 14<sup>th</sup> Street is intended to be reconstructed as a “Complete Street” design. A “Complete Street” design includes accommodation for not only vehicular traffic, but also transit, pedestrians, commuter and recreational bicyclists, in-line skaters, etc. Providing facilities for all users helps reduce the number of single-occupant vehicles using the roadway, and also encourages exercise and healthier lifestyles. The bicycle features in particular are an important part of the City’s effort to gain recognition as a Bike Friendly Community.

From Army Post Road north through Ewing Park, the roadway is proposed as a five-lane roadway, with a raised median that would provide room for landscaping and also left-turn lanes at intersections or major drives. A five-foot bike lane in each direction is proposed to safely accommodate bicycles on the street. A separate 10’ trail on the west side of the road would accommodate all other modes, including walkers, runners, recreational bicyclists (including children), and in-line skaters. Through Ewing Park, this trail is proposed to have an independent alignment from the roadway, to enhance the trail for trail users. A standard four-foot sidewalk will also be included on the east side of Indianola Avenue.

North of Ewing Park to S.E. 14<sup>th</sup> Street, the proximity of existing homes and the limited available right of way width make a Complete Street design much more challenging. Two traffic lanes in each direction are still required to handle the anticipated traffic. The raised median will not be included in this section, but a two-way left-turn lane will be provided north to just past Jackson Elementary School. Continuing north to Evergreen Avenue, this center turn lane will not be included in order to minimize the total roadway width and the impacts to adjacent homes and businesses. From Evergreen north to SE 14<sup>th</sup> Street, turn lanes will again be provided to accommodate the heavy turning traffic.

There has been little public concern over the proposed roadway section from Army Post Road north through Ewing Park. However, there has been considerable public concern over the impacts of the roadway widening and other proposed features in the section from Ewing Park north to Evergreen Avenue. The preliminary design concept through this area provided a continuous four-foot sidewalk on the east side of the road, and an eight-foot wide multipurpose trail, or “sidepath” (like a sidewalk) on the west side of the road, with no bike lanes or other bicycle accommodations.

**Public Input Meeting**

At the public meeting, Rich Voelker, Project Manager for Snyder & Associates, presented the existing design concept and several alternatives regarding the bicycle accommodation between Ewing Park and S.E. 14<sup>th</sup> Street. Five alternatives were presented and discussed. The alternatives differ by varying the bicycle accommodation between the sidepath, “Share the Road” lanes (a wider outside lane to allow cars to pass bikes within the lane safely), and dedicated bike lanes.

A survey form was distributed for the meeting participants to fill out. The survey was not intended to be a vote, but was used to gain an understanding of the public’s perception of the need for pedestrian and bicycle facilities on Indianola Avenue. The results of the survey showed that participants gave the highest average importance to providing safe accommodations to schoolchildren and pedestrians, with lesser importance to recreational bicyclists, and lowest importance to commuter bicyclists and in-line skaters. However, while receiving the lowest average scores, four of the 39 respondents gave safe accommodations for commuter bicyclists a “most important” rating, and five gave in-line skaters a “most important” rating.

Participants also rated the five alternatives as part of the survey. Alternate C (the preliminary design concept), received the highest number of “most favored” ratings and the lowest number of “least favored” ratings of any of the alternatives. However, each of the five alternatives received some ratings as “most favored” and some ratings as “least favored”. The results of the survey questions show that there is a lot of interest in providing safe accommodations for various users, but no clear consensus on how to best do that. Other input from the meeting showed that there is also concern about the impacts of different features on the adjacent property owners.

### **Incorporating Public Input**

Following the public meeting, staff from Engineering, Traffic and Transportation, Parks and Snyder & Associates have met to consider how to incorporate the input from the public meeting, along with previous public input from the corridor and environmental studies, into a recommendation for the “best” alternative. We generally defined the “best” alternative as providing safe accommodations for the greatest variety of users while minimizing the impacts to the adjacent properties.

The impacts to adjacent properties are most directly related to the width of the new street and the total right-of-way that is needed to accommodate the roadway, clear zone setbacks, utilities, sidewalks, and other features. The number of traffic lanes proposed are required to adequately handle the projected traffic volumes. While a two-lane roadway from Evergreen Avenue south to Jackson School and a three-lane section continuing to Ewing Park could accommodate existing traffic volumes, it would not adequately accommodate the projected future traffic volumes. The additional curb lanes will also be very important for providing future transit service through this corridor. So the basic roadway widths are pretty much established, and the total right-of-way width is related to the other features to be included in the project.

Because of the strong concerns of the adjacent property owners, any recommended alternative should not exceed the total right-of-way width of the preliminary design concept, or Alternate C. In the five-lane section, this width would be 92’ and in the four-lane section this width would be 80’. For the five-lane section from Ewing Park north to Jackson School, this 92’ right-of-way would be 12’ wider (approximately six feet on each side) than the existing 80’ right-of-way, and for the four-lane section, the 80’ right-of-way would be 14’ wider (approximately seven feet on each side) than the existing 66’ right-of-way. While there may be some variation for individual properties, the proposed additional right-of-way would generally be six or seven feet on each side of the new road.

Staff has considered a number of various combinations of bicycle and pedestrian features to try to develop an overall best alternative. An important factor for different features was continuity, so that a bicycle or pedestrian feature that was provided in one section of the corridor would not be dropped in another section, but would be continuous to the greatest extent possible.

### **Recommendations**

1. Keep the current design concept from Army Post Road north through Ewing Park, with a five-lane roadway, five-foot bike lane in each direction, separate 10’ trail on the west side of the road, and four-foot sidewalk on the east side of Indianola Avenue.
2. Incorporate the proposed features of the preliminary concept design (Alternative C at the meeting) in the section from Ewing Park north to SE 14<sup>th</sup> Street. These features include a four-foot sidewalk on the east side of the roadway and an eight-foot multipurpose trail (sidepath) on

the west side. Both the sidewalk and sidepath will provide a safe route for students walking or biking to either Jackson Elementary School or to Weeks Middle School at Indianola Avenue and Park Avenue. The eight-foot sidepath will also provide a continuous connection to the 10' trail through Ewing Park, and will accommodate pedestrians, recreational bikers and in-line skaters. A benefit to the adjacent properties is that the Parks and Recreation Department will maintain the sidepath as a bike trail, including snow removal.

3. The design team should incorporate the Alternative C pedestrian and bicycle features into the design of the roadway within the specified right-of-way widths, but should continue to study ways to enhance or modify these features in the final design, including commuter bicyclist. The final design process will include additional public input meetings, and the final recommended design will be presented for a public hearing and Council approval.
4. Because the bike lane and sidepath will end at the north end of the project at SE 14<sup>th</sup> Street, the City should conduct an analysis of how bicyclists, school students and other pedestrians, and other users can be better accommodated north to Weeks Middle School, and ultimately to the downtown area, in the future.

#### **PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S):**

Date: December 17, 2007

Roll Call Number: 07-2416; 07-2417; 07-2418

Action:

(A) [Authorization](#) to proceed with acquisition of necessary right-of-way and easements for the E. Indianola Avenue Widening. ([Council Communication No. 07-748](#))

(B) [Hearing](#) on intent to acquire agricultural property and authorize acquisition of the necessary property interests thereof from Lemar Koethe for property at the northeast corner of Army Post Road and E. Indianola Avenue.

(C) [Hearing](#) on intent to acquire property for recreational trail purposes and authorize acquisition of the necessary property interests thereof from various property owners. Moved by Meyer to adopt; refer to the City Manager to: 1) Hold a public meeting at Jackson Elementary, 2) Determine possible alternatives for the bike trail, 3) Coordinate construction schedule with Jackson Elementary renovations, 4) Expand public notices to include all residents who received the Environmental Impact Statements. Motion Carried 6-1.

Date: October 8, 2007

Roll Call Number: 07-1994

Action: Approved the East Indianola Avenue Corridor Study, and approved the professional services agreement with Snyder & Associates, Inc. (David Moeller, P.E., President, 501 SW Oralabor Road, Ankeny, Iowa 50021) for the East Indianola Avenue Roadway Design, total not to exceed \$988,908.00.

#### **BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S):** Park and Recreation Board

Date: February 26, 2008

Roll Call Number: N/A

Action: Received and filed a staff report that presented the various alternatives from the public meeting, recommended Option C as the most-favored option and further recommended that staff continue to work with the design team to explore a modified Option C that could include additional enhanced bicycle features in the final design of the project.

**ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS:**

Normal Council actions on consultant services for design and construction administration, and construction contracts.

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