

Date March 10, 2008

APPROVAL OF EAST INDIANOLA AVENUE WIDENING – SE 14TH STREET TO ARMY POST ROAD DESIGN CONCEPT FROM PUBLIC INPUT MEETING

WHEREAS, At their 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 14th Street to Army Post Road; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

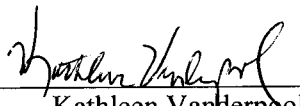
WHEREAS, this public meeting was held January 31, 2008 at Weeks Middle School, and was well attended; and

WHEREAS, 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.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Des Moines, Iowa that the recommendations for bicycle and pedestrian accommodations presented in the attached Council Communication, are hereby approved, and the City Manager is authorized to proceed with the design of the Indianola Avenue Widening project to incorporate those recommendations.

(Council Letter Number 08- 115 Attached)

Moved by _____ to adopt.

FORM APPROVED: 
Kathleen Vanderpool
Deputy City Attorney



COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
COLEMAN				
HENSLEY				
KIERNAN				
MAHAFFEY				
MEYER				
VLASSIS				
TOTAL				
MOTION CARRIED			APPROVED	

CERTIFICATE

I, DIANE RAUH, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

Mayor

City Clerk

Indianola Avenue Reconstruction
Public Information Meeting
January 31, 2008

Responses to Questions

(The following is a summary of the questions asked during the Public Meeting. The answers reflect the responses given, and also include any additional information gathered after the meeting.)

- **Regarding the project fly-through shown during the presentation, Is the trail on the west side of the road?**

The current proposal includes an 8' wide sidepath (which would function similar to a trail) on the west side of Indianola Avenue, from SE 14th Street to Ewing Park. From Ewing Park south to Army Post Road, there will be a full 10' wide trail on the west side of Indianola Avenue. The east side of the road will have a standard 4' wide sidewalk.

- **Regarding the project fly-through shown during the presentation, what is the black line shown outside the edges of the sidepath and sidewalk?**

The black line shown on the fly-through, and on the large maps displayed at the meeting, is a very preliminary, approximate grading limit line that indicates where proposed grading for the project might tie in to existing ground. It gives an indication of the area that will be temporarily affected by construction. Grading for intersections and driveways will impact the limit lines; therefore these lines will change during design. Where the grading limits are outside of proposed right of way, the City will need to obtain temporary construction easements from the property owner. These easements will be included in negotiations during the right of way acquisition phase. At the end of the construction project, the temporary easement areas will be restored with sod and the property will be under full ownership of the property owner.

- **Will there be a traffic signal at Watrous Avenue?**

Yes, a traffic signal is proposed at Watrous Avenue to replace the stop sign that is there now.

- **Will there be traffic signals south of Watrous Avenue?**

Yes, traffic signals are proposed at all of the following intersections: Evergreen Avenue, Watrous Avenue, McKinley Avenue, Easter Lake Drive, and Payton Avenue.

- **Will the traffic signal at Watrous Avenue be more than just a pedestrian signal?**

Yes, it will be a full traffic signal for the intersection of Watrous Avenue and Indianola Avenue, including pedestrian push-buttons.

- **Will a pedestrian overpass be considered at Jackson Elementary?**

A pedestrian overpass near Jackson Elementary was considered during the corridor study. The vertical clearance requirements over the roadway, coupled with very flat slopes for accessibility requirements, would create a very long, out of direction route up and down long ramps, so that walking across the street would be perceived as the easier, faster route, and the overpass wouldn't be used.

Many studies performed across the country have shown very limited usage of pedestrian overpasses where a level street crossing is available. The City does have three pedestrian overpasses at elementary schools, but in each of those cases the terrain allows one end of the overpass to be connected directly to an elevated main entrance at the school, so the ramping is needed on only one side of the street, and the usage is much higher. Jackson Elementary does not have an elevated entrance, so any pedestrian overpass would require long ramps on both sides of the street, which would limit the usage and substantially increase the cost.

- **Will Indianola Avenue be a posted truck route?**

No, Indianola Avenue will not be a posted truck route. As such, no through truck traffic should use Indianola Avenue. Trucks with destinations within the corridor are allowed.

- **Will any embargoes or weight limits be posted for trucks?**

Trucks are limited to legal loads but are allowed on public streets. Legal loads for trucks are regulated both by axle weights and total truck weight. Legal weight trucks will be allowed to use Indianola Avenue if it is the shortest route from a designated truck route to or from a destination for delivery or pickup.

- **Truck traffic at Jackson Elementary seems dangerous, are any changes proposed here?**

A full traffic signal, including pedestrian push-buttons and new count-down pedestrian signals, will be installed at Watrous Avenue to replace the current pedestrian-only signal. An adult crossing guard will also be considered to help students cross Indianola Avenue at this signal.

- **How much ground will be taken?**

The amount of right-of-way acquired from each property will vary along the length of the project. For example, from Jackson Elementary to Ewing Park, the existing right of way is 80' wide. The current proposed right of way is 92' wide, so it appears that approximately six feet may be required on each side. North of Jackson Elementary the right of way changes width, so the right of way acquired will be different there. More definite numbers will be determined during preliminary design.

- **What is the City Code concerning clearance between house and Right-of-Way?**

The City Code concerning front yard building setback varies depending on the individual zoning district. The guidelines for the individual Zoning Districts are as follows for new construction:

Zoning District	Setback
C-1 and C-4	25'
R1-60, R1-70, R1-80	30'
R-3 and PUD	35'
Carmen Estates	Varies (27' - 50')

The City Zoning Regulation identifies that where a portion of a platted lot is conveyed to a governmental body for public right-of-way purposes, there will be a setback exemption to the new right-of-way line. For detailed zoning questions, feel free to contact the Permit and Development Center at 283-4200.

- **Will the value of land acquired be based on current values or the value after the roadway is constructed?**

The valuation process will determine the current value of the amount of land to be acquired and the acquisition's effect on the remaining property. During this process, individual property owners will be allowed the opportunity to meet with the City's acquisition agent to discuss their specific valuation concerns before a fair market value is determined.

- **Traffic congestion at Jackson Elementary is a concern, what will be done about school traffic?**

Most of the congestion around the school, and generally around schools, is related to short-term parking to drop-off or pick-up students. The design team will be working with the school district regarding potential site improvements for loading and unloading areas. We will try to separate these areas from the street traffic as much as possible.

The two-way left turn lane and additional traffic lane in each direction will also help alleviate traffic congestion on Indianola Avenue at Jackson Elementary.

- **What will be the posted speed limit?**

The posted speed limit will be 35 mph. In addition, the project will incorporate the SCHOOL SPEED LIMIT 25 WHEN FLASHING signs for a reduced speed limit on Indianola Avenue adjacent to Jackson Elementary during school crossing time.

- **Why the accommodations for bicyclists?**

The City of Des Moines is taking steps to be a more bicycle-friendly community. On December 17, 2007, the City Council approved the adoption of "Goals to Make Des Moines a Bicycle Friendly Community". The City's goals include improvements to the trail network and the bicycle network, and implementation of the Safe Routes to School Program.

The City is responding to the demands of the public for future improvements to recreational trails and bicycle facilities (cited as the number one demand of the public). The number one requested neighborhood feature is recreational trails.

The true volume of commuter bicyclists won't be realized until safer bicycle facilities are provided. Providing better accommodations for bicyclists will greatly enhance the safety for those who ride on major streets. If the road is safer for bicyclists, the more it will be used.

- **Will a summary of the meeting be published?**

A summary of the discussion following the formal presentation will be posted to the City of Des Moines' project website.

- **Who will maintain the trail and keep it clear of debris?**

Recreational trails are included in the City of Des Moines parks system. The Parks Department will maintain the trail, including snow removal and trash pick-up, as it does for all sidepaths, trails, and parks.

- **What safety precautions will be taken at the pedestrian tunnel in Ewing Park?**

Lighting in the tunnel will be provided. In addition, both ends of the tunnel will be open, which will allow natural light into the tunnel. This tunnel will be very similar to two trail culverts on the Great Western Trail where it passes under Highway 28 and Iowa 5 between Des Moines and Cumming. Also, trail use enhances security, as an increasing number of trail users carry cell phones, which creates a kind of neighborhood watch in these areas.

- **Was a 3-lane roadway design considered?**

Yes, a 3-lane roadway was considered. The design life of the proposed improvements is 30-40 years. Traffic projections over this time period indicate that approximately 19,000 vehicles will travel on Indianola Avenue on a daily basis by the year 2030. The numerous access points and associated turning movements decrease the effective capacity of a three lane roadway. The second lane in each direction is needed for capacity at the signalized intersections, especially with the high left-turn volumes that will occur at those intersections. In addition, Indianola Avenue has been tentatively identified as a major future transit corridor, and the additional lane in each direction will be very important to provide enhanced bus transit service.

- **Will the AASHTO 2010 bike guides be used for the trail design?**

The design team will use the 1999 AASHTO *Guide for Development of Bicycle Facilities* until the 2010 *Guide* is officially adopted. However, the design team will use design techniques to assure that we provide the best combination of features for bicyclists, pedestrians, and vehicles through the entire corridor, including the northern end where the right-of-way is very constrained by existing houses and businesses.

- **Will the full median in front of Bloomfield Methodist Church be constructed, won't that block access to the Church from the south?**

The study proposed a left turn lane to E Payton Avenue, with a median opening for the fire station. The Bloomfield Methodist Church is between these two locations, such that only right turns in and right turns out will be available from the current driveway. The design team will further evaluate this, as well as all intersections and locations of median breaks, during the design process. This evaluation will include the consideration of private access easements or agreements and/or "private frontage roads", which have been used successfully to provide access to median openings on other City streets that have raised medians.

- **What is the liability for property owners for bikes on the trail?**

It is suggested that each property owner review their individual insurance policy with their insurance agent. It can be assumed that everyone is responsible for their own actions, which is no different than when there is a public sidewalk adjacent to private property.

The City of Des Moines has implemented similar sidepaths, with similar safety and liability concerns.

There have been no claims involving the sidepath along Urbandale Avenue in the 15 years that it's been there.

- **Why build a trail on Indianola Avenue that ends at SE 14th Street, where there is no trail?**

There is an existing trail that was constructed on the east side of Indianola Avenue north from Columbus Park across the Raccoon River to Principal Park. This trail connects to the Meredith Trail, the trail on the south side of M. L. King, Jr. Parkway, and the proposed Principal Riverwalk. The City will investigate the potential for extending the sidepath, or some other bicycle accommodations from SE 14th Street to Columbus Park in the future, if funding allows.

The City must consider how much more difficult and costly it would be to retrofit a sidepath to this section of Indianola Avenue in the future if it is not included as part of the original construction. That is why the City is currently including a sidepath in their plans for reconstruction of Indianola Avenue south of SE 14th Street.

By providing a more complete design on Indianola Avenue to include bicyclists, the City is making it safer to get to SE 14th Street, where there are a number of food and retail destinations. Trail users may also decide to continue on Indianola Avenue to downtown, or use the street system to reach some other destination.

- **When will it be appropriate to talk about property values and compensation?**

More information will be provided at future meetings as the design progresses. Small group and individual meetings will also be held to discuss issues specific to a certain property or groups of properties.

Each property owner will also have the opportunity to meet with the Appraiser during the appraisal process and to provide additional information during negotiations if they disagree with the initial appraisal.

- **It appears that land values in the area are dropping, even as building values go up, is that due to this project?**

It is difficult to evaluate this during a period where the real estate market is struggling in general. The appraisal process will address this further at the time that property is acquired.

While it is perceived that the project will have detrimental impacts, there are project features that may have a positive impact on property values, such as new sidewalks and roadway pavement, new curbs and drainage instead of rock shoulders, and improved roadway lighting.

- **Will the trail be lit in Ewing Park?**

No, park trails are not typically lit at night since usage drops significantly after dark. There are exceptions, in parks where the trail remains in significant use at night, the trail is lit. Where the trail is adjacent to the roadway, the street lighting will illuminate the trail.

- **Are skateboarders allowed on the trail?**

Yes, skateboarders may use the trail.

- **Will utilities such as storm sewer and natural gas be included in the construction of the roadway?**

Storm sewer will be constructed with the roadway improvements. Coordination with franchise utilities will occur to determine routing and location of other utilities.

- **Why do we need a recreational trail?**

A recreational trail is one of the minimal ways in which to accommodate several roadway user groups. A trail or sidepath will provide a safe route to school for children in the area who attend Jackson Elementary. A trail or sidepath will accommodate neighborhood families who want to walk or bike together. A trail or sidepath will provide direct access to the trail systems planned in Ewing Park and Easter Lake Park. In general, a trail or sidepath will make Indianola Avenue a more pedestrian and bicycle friendly route.