

# NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street Neighborhood Traffic Plan



## NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street Traffic Committee Meeting #4 Meeting Summary

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**Date:** March 3, 2011

**Location:** Bellevue City Hall, Room 1E-120

**Attendees:**

Karen Gonzalez, City of Bellevue Transportation Neighborhood Services Manager  
Nancy LaCombe, City of Bellevue Transportation Capital Projects Manager  
Eric Vargo, Westridge Apartments  
Jack McLeod, Bellevue School District  
Carolyn Harris, Wilburton Community  
Bre Goss, Wilburton Community  
Dan Renn, Wilburton Community  
Carolyn Maxim, Wilburton Community  
Ron Griffin, Wilburton Community  
Jon Pascal, Transpo Group  
Kristine Edens, EnvirolIssues

**Committee members not in attendance:**

Vangie Garcia, City of Bellevue and NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street Project Manager  
Michael Shovlin, Bellevue Police Department  
Mike Remington, Bellevue Fire Department  
Pat Sheffels, City of Bellevue Planning Commission  
Briana Bennitt, Three Cedars Waldorf School  
Leann Hopwood, Wallace properties  
Hal Scott, Wilburton Community  
Bob Shay, Wilburton Community

**Welcome and Introductions**

Kristine Edens welcomed the attendees and reviewed the draft agenda and purpose of the meeting, which was to:

- Update the traffic committee on the status of all Wilburton Connections Projects, including the latest City Council discussions and recommendations.
- Discuss next steps for public outreach for NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street, including the committee's thoughts on sending out the NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street newsletter and questionnaire originally drafted in the fall of 2010.
- Determine the timing and process for a final committee recommendation for NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street.

Kristine also went over quick housekeeping items and the expectations for conduct at each committee meeting.

## Update on Wilburton Connections Projects

Nancy LaCombe provided an update regarding recent City Council discussions and recommendations related to other Wilburton Connections Projects relevant to NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street.

### 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE

- Construction on segment one (between NE 4<sup>th</sup> and NE 8<sup>th</sup> Streets) of the 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE widening project will begin toward the end of 2011.
- The second segment of the 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE widening project (between NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street to south of NE 12<sup>th</sup> Street) was funded in the 2011-2017 Transportation Capital Improvement Plan as a high priority project by the City Council at the end of 2010, due to strong community support to do so. This second segment is anticipated to have design complete by the end of the year, with construction beginning sometime in 2012.

### NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street:

- The original preferred concept extends NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street from 116<sup>th</sup> to 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. Between the BNSF corridor and 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street would cross the south end of the existing Best Buy building footprint, requiring a partial rebuild of the Best Buy building and loss of building square footage and parking.
- In addition to the original preferred concept for NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street, the City of Bellevue is now considering two new options for NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street, if the necessary parties voluntarily agree to any property acquisitions required to make any one of these options work:
  - o Option 1: Same alignment as the original preferred concept, but reconstruct any lost building Best Buy footprint on the north side of the Best Buy building. This would require property acquisition from a portion of the Bellevue School District and the Mutual Materials parcels. This option presents some challenges with the Best Buy loading dock location as well. This option requires the school district and Mutual Materials to be “willing sellers” of their property, as the City of Bellevue cannot require one private property owner to dedicate their land to benefit another private property owner. The most westerly 30 feet of the School District parcel has an access easement granted to Mutual Materials. This option would use a portion of this area.
  - o Option 2: This option shifts the alignment of NE 4<sup>th</sup> street completely south of the Best Buy building. This option will still require some modification of Best Buy’s loading dock area, but has less of an impact on the Mutual Materials and School District properties. The most westerly 30 feet of the School District parcel has an access easement granted to Mutual Materials. This option would use a portion of this area. This option does impact more parking in the Home Depot parking lot. Therefore, a new parking structure would need to be built on the Home Depot site with this option. This structure would likely be two levels high plus a ground floor level, and would not be taller than the existing Home Depot building.

Again, either of the additional options for NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street require both the school district and Mutual Materials to be willing sellers of the property needed to move forward. The City of Bellevue cannot take private property to benefit another private property.

*Comments/Discussion:*

- Will NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street also require property acquisition from the Mutual Materials and Bellevue School District properties? Will the extension of NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street render the school district bus holding area unusable?
  - Additional property acquisitions will be necessary to make the future alignment of NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street work. However, with either Option 1 or Option 2 for NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street and the future planned alignment of NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street, over two-thirds of the Mutual Materials property may be required. This likely means the entire Mutual Materials property will need to be acquired. This would be accounted for in the project costs for the NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street project. The school district property is already impacted by the 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE Segment 1 project, requiring modifications to how the School District parks the busses. Additional impacts from the either of the NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street options are being analyzed by the school district. The future NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street alignment will significantly impact the property.
- What is the timing of the NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street project?
  - The project is funded for conceptual design only. It is anticipated the Washington State Department of Transportation will actually design and construct the project. There is nothing currently in the state legislative package to further fund the project beyond conceptual design.
- Will the future impacts of the NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street and 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE projects affect the City's thinking regarding the design of these projects, as the Mutual Materials and school district properties seem to lose a significant amount of property if all three projects are built under their current designs?
  - The City plans to move forward with the projects that are funded (including NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street) under current federal guidelines and funding, and will continue to work with stakeholders and property owners to determine the best design for all projects in the Wilburton area.
- I highly recommend the city consider improving a north/south road (such as 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE) on the west side of the BNSF corridor, instead of widening 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. This will help to keep the traffic on the west side of the BNSF corridor and relieve congestion issues on NE 4<sup>th</sup> and 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. We should then use NE 6<sup>th</sup> as an alternate route for all traffic, not just transit and other HOV users.
  - Through past transportation planning efforts, the City identified the need for two east/west crossings to help distribute traffic to and from the Wilburton area and downtown Bellevue. Therefore, we the City needs both the NE 4<sup>th</sup> and NE 6<sup>th</sup> extensions to do this.
- Is the 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE widening to NE 8<sup>th</sup> fully funded? What is the overall anticipated schedule for all major Wilburton Connections projects?
  - Segment one (NE 4<sup>th</sup> to NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street) of the 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE widening project is fully funded. Construction on segment one will begin toward the end of 2011.
  - Segment two (NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street to south of NE 12<sup>th</sup> Street) of the 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE widening project as well as Phase 1 of the NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street extension (116<sup>th</sup> to the BNSF corridor) are expected to go to construction in 2012.
  - Phase 2 of the NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street extension is expected to go to construction in 2013 or 2014, after 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE is widened north to just south of NE 12<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Is there a committee like ours focusing on all of the issues and considerations now involved with the options for NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street east of the BNSF corridor?

- City staff are working very closely with stakeholders with an interest in the NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street project, but there is not an official committee like the NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street Traffic Committee dedicated to the NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street project.
- Can you provide an update on the federal funding deadlines for the Wilburton Connections Projects?
  - Funds for the 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE widening project must be obligated by September of this year. This means that the project plans must be complete to go to construction and right of way must be certified for the project. Right of way has already been certified for segment 1 of 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, and design changes are awaiting final approval.
  - Funds for phase 1 of the NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street project must be obligated by March of 2012. The new options being considered are making the obligation process for NE 4<sup>th</sup> more complicated.
  - The City does anticipate making both funding deadlines.
- The Council just considered the Local Improvement District (LID) to help fund the Wilburton projects (NE 4<sup>th</sup> and 120<sup>th</sup> Segment 1), and pushed the discussion to March 7<sup>th</sup>. Will the second phase of NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street be funded with or without LID funds?
  - There will be a funding shortfall without the LID funds, but there may be some project savings from the NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street project, as well as other state or federal funding sources that may help fully fund the NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street project regardless.
- Is it true that if City Council passes the LID, property owners can still vote to overturn the LID?
  - If property owners that represent 60% or more of the special benefit assessment within the LID protest the City Council authorization of the LID, then yes, the LID can be reversed.

### **NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street Wilburton Newsletter and Questionnaire**

Karen Gonzalez then invited the committee to discuss the benefits of sending out the NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street newsletter and questionnaire. Karen reminded the group that at the last traffic committee meeting in November, the committee agreed to meet again in early 2011 to discuss next steps for a broader community input process and whether or not to send out the questionnaire.

#### *Comments/Discussion*

- It may be smart to wait to send out the questionnaire and newsletter until the Wilburton community starts to see dirt moving on 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE later this year. Then the community may pay more attention to the reality of these projects in their neighborhood, and have more of an incentive to read the newsletter and respond to the questionnaire.
- The funding and design of what is desired on NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street must be included in phase 2 of the NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street project, so the committee can not wait much longer to express what it recommends for NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street, or risk missing this opportunity to set aside the appropriate budget amount to properly improve NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Can the committee simply recommend that a placeholder be included in the NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street phase 2 budget to implement any improvements to NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street within a range of options – from the least expensive to the most expensive?
  - I believe \$700,000 was set aside to make any recommended improvements to NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street along with the completion of NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street to 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. If the committee and the community support an option that may require additional funding, it may be

wise to use this time to make that recommendation, so there is more justification to include additional funds in the NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street budget to accommodate that request.

- \$700,000 does not sound like much to fund any recommended improvement on NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street.
  - The \$700,000 was simply a placeholder until the City had a better idea of what the Wilburton community desired.
- It will be important for the committee to frame the community's concerns accurately enough so the budget for NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street is in place to make sure something meaningful can be done to improve or protect NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street and the Wilburton community once the other Wilburton Connections projects are complete.
- The committee should also consider whether or not improvements to NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street should be put in place before or after NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street is extended to 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. If after, the community can see the real impacts of NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street on NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street, but this may be to the detriment of the Wilburton community.
- As the only homeowner on NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street, I have great concerns about waiting until after the other Wilburton Connections projects are in place to measure the true impacts to NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street. I believe it is important to be proactive about what the community wants, and have those improvements tested and then permanently installed before traffic increases on NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street. I am afraid if NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street is left open to traffic, drivers will find it and continue to use it as a cut through route into the future, regardless of future improvements made to deter this activity. I would hate to have my family be involved in the one accident later to prove the City needs to do something to NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street once traffic increases.
- I would like to understand more about what the school district is thinking, especially when the likelihood of additional, not less, space for bus maintenance and storage is high, given recent growth and expected continued growth of the student, and especially elementary population.
  - There are not many alternative 5 acre sites that are central to the facilities and schools the district serves. Sites further away require additional transportation costs that the district may not be able to support, so it is best to stay at the current bus storage and maintenance sites. That being said, the district would also be assessed under the LID for NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street for the bus storage lot, maintenance office and administration offices nearby, and it is already selling a portion of the bus storage lot for the 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE widening project. Staying in place is proving to have its own challenges.
- It will be important to note in the survey that the preferred improvements identified for NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street can first be implemented temporarily to then guide the final decision on what to install permanently on NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street.
  - Yes, this is an option we discussed, and similar to the approach other communities (related to 4<sup>th</sup> Street to the west) within the City of Bellevue has taken. This community did decide to make permanent their temporary partial closure improvement.
  - NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street to the west has a more typical surrounding street grid system. The community there had NE 1<sup>st</sup> and NE 5<sup>th</sup> Streets to access their neighborhoods. Wilburton's NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street is a main access into the Wilburton community, without as many other options. However, we have heard through this committee process that many local residents use 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and NE 1<sup>st</sup> Street to get into and out of the Wilburton neighborhood.
- Will 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE close completely while it is being widened?
  - I believe the City of Bellevue will require the contractor to provide one lane in each direction. The team can check in with the City's right of way team to ask about the

constructability plan for 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, and report back to the committee on this question.

- Would the City consider completely closing NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street temporarily during construction on 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE?
  - Doing this may not help generate the community support you may need later to install a permanent partial closure or any other modification of NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street. With active construction on 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, you will create a worst case scenario if 5<sup>th</sup> Street is also closed, further impacting local traffic.
- Should the traffic committee consider other options other than a full or partial closure that allow for more accessibility – such as speed bumps, traffic circles or curves – but make NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street less attractive for cut through drivers?
  - When you install these types of slowing improvements, the community will still see an increase of traffic. It is observed that drivers, even at lower speeds, will use alternate routes if they feel like they are avoiding traffic and can keep moving. Speed humps would only be somewhat effective on the east side of NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street, considering the steep grade on the west side of NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Are the residents in the multi-family buildings on the west side of NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street aware of the proposed improvements being considered? I think it is important to get these resident's input on how a full or partial closure may impact their eastbound access on NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street.
  - Yes, this will be important. During the recent snow storm, drivers forced west got stuck, due to the steep grade. Eastbound access is important for the multi-family residents on NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street.
  - Any improvement, including a full or partial closure, could be designed to allow access from the Westridge Apartments to eastbound NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street.
- The committee will need to weigh any results received from a survey, and consider how those farther away from NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street and those closer to NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street differ in opinion regarding how NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street should be improved temporarily or permanently.
- What is the cost to send one of these surveys out to the community?
  - It will cost the City approximately \$2,000 mail and pay for returned postage for the surveys. I encourage the committee to not consider the cost of the survey in their decision, and this cost may be relatively minor to show some due diligence on behalf of the committee to solicit broader community input prior to making its recommendation for NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street.
- I believe the survey results will help the traffic committee make a final recommendation for a temporary and then permanent improvement for NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street. The results will also help the committee advocate for an appropriate budget to be included in the NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street budget for NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street to do something genuine to protect the Wilburton community from the anticipated traffic with the other Wilburton Connections projects.
- The survey will also provide the committee with some backing and support from the wider committee, instead of simply making a recommendation based only on the committee's perspective.
- I believe we actually have a small window to solicit this input from the broader community. We should gather community input and put in place any temporary improvement before construction on 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE.
- The committee can help promote the survey through the Wilburton Community Association meeting and newsletter coming up.

## Next Steps and Action Items

Karen recapped the action items moving forward.

- Revise NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street newsletter and questionnaire:
  - Ensure it is clear that any improvements can be installed temporarily to guide the final decision on how to permanently install improvements on NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street.
  - Consider input from the Wilburton Community Association Meeting on the newsletter and questionnaire. A board meeting is currently tentatively scheduled for March 18<sup>th</sup>.
  - Make it clear in the questionnaire that respondents have to provide their address, in order for the committee to have enough information to understand the opinions of Wilburton community members close by and further away from NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street.
  - Expand the explanation of issues and options in the questionnaire, to ensure those filling out the survey understand the tradeoffs and importance of making improvements to NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street, considering traffic impacts expected due to all of the other planned Wilburton Connections Projects.
- Develop preliminary cost estimates for a range of different options for NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street, to ensure the proper amount of funding is being set aside in the NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street Project to adequately fund improvements for NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Coordinate with members from the Wilburton Community Association to promote filling out and sending back the NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street questionnaire once it is sent out.
- City staff to check in with the right of way group and report back to the committee regarding the constructability plan for 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE.
- Confirm that Briana Bennitt is still the best contact at Three Cedars Waldorf School. Dan Renn noted a recent advertisement for a new position there.
- Send out NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street newsletter and questionnaire in mid to late May 2011.
- Convene another Traffic Committee meeting in June 2011 to review the outcomes of the survey and discuss next steps for a final committee recommendation for NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street.

The committee agreed to these next steps. Karen thanked the committee members for their time and attendance.

## Adjourned at 7:00 PM

### Update:

- Ron Kessack, Right-of-Way Supervisor, has confirmed that the current construction traffic control plan for 120<sup>th</sup> Ave NE Widening (Segment 1) proposes to provide one lane of traffic open in each direction.
- Briana Bennitt is still our contact with Thee Cedars Waldorf School. There is a new executive director but she is a parent volunteer that his helping with site planning.