



Meeting Notes

SUBJECT: Abbott Loop Public Involvement
GROUP: Public Meeting #2
DATE: January 5, 2004
LOCATION: Service High School

MEETING ATTENDANCE: 209 sign in with 150 present during presentation
MEETING MATERIALS: 1) Slide presentation, 2) project graphics (alternatives, aerial before and after slides, 3) Scoping Comments, 4) project cross-sections

ATTENDANCE LIST: attached

MEETING AGENDA:

- 5:00 PM to 7 PM -- Open House format with staff taking comments/answering questions at displays
- 7 PM to 8 PM – Stewart Osgood presented project status, discussion of alternatives
- 8 PM to 10 PM – Audience comment period with speakers and their subjects as follows:

During Stewart's presentation, there were some general questions from the audience.

- Question regarding who ran and owned the Heritage Land Bank. It was answered that the city owns and operates it.
- It was asked what the length of the undeveloped portion of the Dowling Extension was. The response was 400 feet.
- An audience member wanted to know why was it felt that the bridges should be made longer. Stewart's response was that we wanted to preserve as much land as possible.
- Question regarding what was the proposed length of the bridges. The answer is 750 feet or so.
- An audience member was interested if the Abbott Loop Extension could simply stop at Dowling and not connect to Bragaw. The response was that the scope says the extension is from Abbott Road to 48th.
- A question was asked regarding the assumption of the HLB land and how many acres it was. George Canelos with the HLB responded that there were 200 acres and at this point they were not sure if the DOT wanted to purchase them or not. The value in the budget for all right of way acquisition is \$1 million.
- It was asked the length of time to process the Corps of Engineers wetland permit. The response was that it would take several months.

- Question regarding the cost for the environmental studies and the wetland permits. Stewart's response was \$0.5 million to \$1.5 million.

Questions and comments from speakers that signed up to speak are as follows.

Christine Hannula had four different questions regarding the extension project. The first question was actually for the audience and she asked how many people were in favor of the project. About one-half of the audience members raised their hands. She then asked who lived near Abbott and would be affected. Again, about one-half of the audience, some of the same people, raised their hands. Christine expressed concern that the local well water issue has not been addressed. Stewart responded that most wells are approximately 75 feet deep and the road project is dealing with the top six to eight feet of ground. Christine then asked how many projects DOWL had started studies for and found because of environmental factors the project could not be done. Stewart reasoned that in most cases in the past, DOWL has dealt with rebuilding roads and not starting from scratch so the environmental impacts in the past have been mitigated. Christine's last question dealt with how much money has been spent by DOWL on the project to date. Staff responded that DOWL has billed DOT \$400 – 500,000 to date.

Rosemary Austin lives in the Scenic Foothills area and is in favor of including bike paths and lanes going in both directions. She explained that there is fewer user conflicts if there are dedicated bike lanes, not just multi-use paths.

Walter Parker spoke to being at the end of thirty years of reactive transportation planning in this town. He asked if the project was going ahead even if the Dowling extension does not happen. He expressed concern that all of the alternatives show the Dowling extension in the drawings. He also advised against assuming that the majority of the traffic is heading towards the U-Med area. Stewart responded that the Dowling extension projects is not part of this project but is part of the long-range transportation plan. Stewart also advised against getting into a debate regarding the traffic numbers as the models used are the best currently available.

Joe Herda was born and raised on Abbott. He is a fan of option A – no build, as the traffic is not as bad as it could be. Joe's first question was if the Dowling extension is not an option because there is no funding right now. Stewart responded that was correct, there was no state funding. Joe then asked how to make the Dowling extension a legal fix. Bob Kniefel responded that the project is being discussed using different types of funding. Joe would like an upgrade to Abbott Rd. but for the noise impact to be carefully looked at. He also asked about the private property around the 68th area and the ballparks, asking that private property not be chipped away at. Stewart responded that DOWL is in discussions with BLM regarding the use of the land to the east of the roadway. Joe finished his comments by saying that the legal speed limit should be carefully looked at due to increased traffic.

Al Tamagni stated that the current problem is a 2004 population trying to fit into a 1960 transportation mode. The result is problematic. He is looking forward to the future connectivity between Dowling and Abbott, which will also connect trails and improve the whole community. He believes the connections will improve safety and ambulance time.

He would like to see the road moved as far to the east as possible to decrease the impact on property owners. He would like the speed limit to be carefully analyzed.

Mary Ellen Shea is a dog musher and is in favor of Option A – no build, but is accepting and understanding of change. She discussed Senate Bill 71, which provides Federal funds for trail improvements. She asked that our city look to the future but respect the past and not forget that dog mushing is an important part of the past.

Janice Shamberg reminded the audience that the bond that was passed for the Abbott Loop Extension was part of a huge statewide bond package. She expressed concern that trails are not shown on all of the maps and that there is a need to accommodate children walking to the ball fields. She asked how this project would mitigate Tudor Rd. traffic. Stewart confirmed that the bond package was a statewide package of \$124 million and this \$37.5 million project was just a portion of it. He also explained how the specific alternative Janice spoke about was one of spot upgrades to Abbott and trails would probably not be part of that. He informed the audience that the reduction in Tudor Rd. traffic was looking at peak hour reduction from Bragaw to Lake Otis.

There was a general audience question regarding the approval rating of voting districts, precinct by precinct for this project. Staff responded they would look into it.

Marjorie Linder is opposed to the extension project. She has lived on Jupiter Dr for 26 years and expressed concern that there is a natural tendency to take the shortest route possible. She is worried that Jupiter Dr. could be used as a shortcut to get to the Abbott Loop extension. Residents on Jupiter Dr. do not want the increased traffic on their road.

Bud Rice is an avid trail user and questioned the models used for predicting the traffic on the south end of Abbott Loop. He explained that this extension would not be used just for U-Med access, but for access to all of Alaska and he has concerns that especially on weekends the traffic will increase more than the models suggest it will. He conveyed the concerns of the skijoring club. They would like the road to avoid the wetlands to the extent possible, yet stay within the budget. He also suggested that putting a trail on one side of the road is simply not enough, there should be a separate bridge built for the trail users. When crossing the wetlands, grade separated tunnels are not preferred as they fill in with snow. He is in favor of Alternative D in order to maximize the bridge lengths. He also would like to see a turning lane at both sets of the ball fields for safety. He is in support of spending the maximum money possible for trails and urges people to ignore SB71.

James Garrigues gave a history of the land and the projects in the Abbott area for the last forty years. He expressed concerns that in the past wetlands have been drained and have dried up due to construction. He feels that the Campbell Creek Bridge in the alternatives is too long and he is very concerned about the cost overruns on this project. He is in favor of the project.

Su Flanders expressed concerns with the possible traffic congestion, the noise, the safety and the environmental impacts for this project. She would like to see a safe, bridged crossing for horses at Abbott and Lore and is concerned that a signal crossing is not sufficient. She is not in favor of this project and would like to see the rural area to stay

that way. She asked how the public comments were being developed into the project and also what was the feasibility of Alternative A – no build. Stewart responded that public comments are extremely important and they are considered during the design process. Alternative E is due to agency and public comments in the scoping period. As for the possibility of not completing the project, which would only happen if the wetlands permit was not issued.

Larry Schuller asked to confirm the figure of \$20,000 per linear foot for the bridges. Staff responded – yes that was correct. Larry asked what the attraction of alternative E was and why it was developed. Stewart answered that alternative E came out of the scoping meeting and comments from the public and resource agencies. Larry urged designers to balance the lighting between safety and environmental impacts. He would also like to see separate trails from the roadway in order to enjoy the quiet.

Kevin Dockter asked about the Dowling extension, how far away was it and how long until it is constructed. Staff deferred to AMATS member Doug Van Etten who responded that the Dowling extension is only a ¼ mile long to the Abbott Extension and there was money in the AMATS funding for design. It would be possible, if funded, for construction to take place a few years after the Abbott Extension. Kevin asked why longer bridges were perceived as better for wildlife. Stewart responded that the increased length of the bridges help wildlife movements. Kevin asked how Abbott Rd is going to handle the increased traffic placed on it when this extension is complete. Stewart responded that Abbott Rd is scheduled for an upgrade and that according to the models; there will be decreasing traffic on Abbott Road east of Abbott Loop Road because people will be choosing to use the Abbott extension.

There was discussion by Jim Childers with DOT that various upgrades will be considered on Abbott Rd.

Michael Nolan stated that he was philosophically not in favor of the road and not against the road either. He is concerned about the wildlife in the area. He would like the city of Anchorage to do some out of the box thinking and build a limited access beltway from the Glenn Highway to south Anchorage. He does not think that this road is the fix all for Tudor and Lake Otis traffic. There are concerns for the safety of the kids and the schools in the area. He would really like to see the Dowling extension come into place.

Graham Siebe would like to see bike lanes along with the road, due to the MOA ordinance of no bike riding on sidewalks. Graham suggested having turn lanes on the street intersection to the east of 68th Ave. Graham also suggested having more light poles along the roadway but with less height and rather back from the road. He would also like to see something like a sound fence along the residential areas. There was discussion from Stewart regarding the possibility of cul-de-sacs in the 64th through 68th Ave intersections.

Don Schulz stated that he felt this project was one particular state senators solution to a traffic problem. He feels this road does not solve the entire traffic problem because it will only benefit those going into Eagle River or the U-Med area. The Dowling extension would be helpful. He is in support of building a limited access beltway from

hillside to Eagle River or Downtown. Don felt that shoulder and upgrades must be done on Abbott Loop in order to do the project appropriately.

Diane Holmes expressed her concerns that not fixing the Lake Otis and Tudor intersection is a waste of money. She stated there is no long range transportation plan and has concerns with a road that goes through U-Med area. She is disappointed that more has not been done to deal with transit. Additional alternatives should be developed for this project. She would like to see trails on both sides of the street and would like to see DOWL meet with alternative transportation experts when they come into town. Stewart responded that this extension is not the end-all fix to the Tudor/Lake Otis problem. This is simply one part of the long-range transportation plan. It will help the congestion in mid-town and it is a step in the right direction. Bob replied that the transit system hauls 1 – 2 % of population every day. The challenge is simply convincing people to ride the bus.

Cheryl Richardson is concerned that the transportation system is being developed in a vacuum. The system does not need to cut up this park to get around town. The EAST study and the study DOWL used provide differing traffic numbers and she would like to know which one to believe. She would like to know where people are coming from and where they are going to before this road is built. Cheryl expressed concerns that the air quality will not improve with the increased traffic. The area in which the road is being built is lower in elevation than other areas in Anchorage. Stewart responded that the EAST and the LRTP study are the studies that are being used to provide traffic numbers.

Ann Jensen is worried about more traffic on a rural road that residents want to remain rural. Safety is an issue, especially around the ball fields. She would like to see medians and stop lights on the south end of 68th Ave. She is relieved that DOWL does not see this road as a fix to the Lake Otis/Tudor problem. Ann stated that there is no central arterial way to move traffic in Anchorage. As the city expands, everything becomes cross-town traffic. A centralized freeway is needed.

Erich Heinrich thanked DOWL for the presentation. He feels that it is silly to use state money instead of Federal money for this project and would like to see increased funding for it.

Shannon Woodruff is not concerned about the traffic but about the safety.

Tom Brown stated that traffic is currently at a standstill. He would like to see the project get underway and thanked DOWL for the presentation.

Patrick Lemay explained how traffic impacted his life when he drove all around Hillside from Elmendorf AFB in order pick up a co-worker. He stated he is tired of going around Anchorage and would like to see the road built.

Randy Seaman is opposed to the project. He understands the need to improve traffic but stated that the current traffic is really not that bad. He fears that this road will increase traffic into the Abbott area and with that brings an increase in crime and violence.

Mary Hertert explained the idea that as roads are built, so are stoplights. Stop and go traffic frustrates people. She asked that slower speeds or roundabouts be looked at for this project as opposed to stoplights.

Matt Riley is an advocate for this project. He stated that since we cannot start the transportation system over; everything done will be a band-aid fix. He has been watching this project develop for 27 years and would like to see an improved transit grid system. He suggested a possible extension from the Abbott Loop extension to the South Anchorage high school in the next 10 to fifteen years. He hopes that people who live along the corridor will find a use for it.