



**BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND, WA**

**AB 4299
May 5, 2008
Study Session**

**MERRIMOUNT & ISLAND CREST WAY POST
CONSTRUCTION ANALYSIS & OPTIONS**

Proposed Council Action:

Determine which option to include in the
Transportation Improvement Plan

DEPARTMENT OF Maintenance (Anne Tonella-Howe)

COUNCIL LIAISON n/a

EXHIBITS 1. Proposed Options

APPROVED BY CITY MANAGER

AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE	\$	n/a
AMOUNT BUDGETED	\$	n/a
APPROPRIATION REQUIRED	\$	n/a

SUMMARY

Background

As part of the 2008-2013 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) discussion at the June 18, 2007 Council meeting, staff presented six options for an improvement project at the intersection of Island Crest Way and Merrimount Drive/SE 44th Street. A motion was made and approved 6-0 to include Option 4a (modified) in the TIP for implementation in 2007. With Council input staff proceeded with final design of this trial improvement and held a community meeting on September 6th to explain the proposed project. The modifications to the intersection were installed on October 26th. Post-construction data collection began in March and an open house community meeting was held April 16th at the Community Center to present the results of the post construction analysis and gather feedback from the community now that the modifications have been in-place for six-months. 39 residents signed in at the meeting which included staff, the consultant team, Mayor Pearman, Deputy Mayor Jahncke and Councilmember Bassett.

At tonight's study session a brief presentation will be made to update Council on what we have learned, summarize what we are hearing from the community, and present six alternatives for Council to consider in moving forward with a permanent solution for the intersection. Joe Giacobazzi of KPG, the firm hired to analyze the intersection and design the project, will be on hand to lead the presentation. Staff is seeking direction from Council on a preferred option which will be included in the 2009-2014 TIP scheduled for Council adoption on June 2nd.

What We Learned

Several demonstrated accomplishments have resulted from this project:

- The 85th percentile speed (speed at which 85 percent of vehicles drive at or lower) was lowered from 43 mph to 40 mph.
- We've seen a significant reduction of vehicles speeding over 45 mph.

- There has been no significant diversion of Island Crest Way traffic onto neighborhood streets.
- There have been no increased traffic delays on Island Crest Way.
- There are fewer gaps in traffic for pedestrian crossings and left turns out of driveways and side streets.
- We have seen shortened delays on Merrimount Drive at Island Crest Way.
- We have seen a reduction in angle or “t-bone” accidents.
- We have had two reported accidents since the installation, neither directly attributed to the modifications at the intersection.
 1. On Tuesday October 30, 2007 a multi-vehicle accident occurred at the intersection. A driver turning left from Merrimount onto northbound Island Crest Way completed the left turn, and then merged immediately into the northbound curb lane colliding with the vehicle in the curb lane. At the same time there was a rear-end collision southbound on Island Crest Way at the intersection. The first driver slammed on its brakes to avoid hitting the above mentioned left turning vehicle, causing the vehicle behind it to stop suddenly which led to that vehicle being rear-ended. No injuries were reported.
 2. On Friday February 1, 2008 a multi-vehicle accident occurred at the intersection. City crews had the northbound left turn lane closed for maintenance. A driver heading northbound stopped in the through curb lane to attempt a left turn onto Merrimount. A chain reaction of several vehicles stopping quickly to avoid rear-ending the vehicle in front resulted in a rear-end accident. No injuries were reported.

Summary of Community Comments

Staff received 59 comments to date since the notice of the community meeting was mailed. Most citizens prefer that a traffic signal be installed at the intersection (24 of 59). Many like the current installation (14 of 59) but would like it enhanced to make it visually appealing while some would like to make Island Crest Way a 3-lane roadway (8 of 59) to enhance pedestrian and vehicle access across Island Crest Way.

Since the modifications at the intersection were installed last October the community continues to report near misses tied to vehicles changing lanes at the last minute to avoid being trapped in the southbound right turn drop lane or the northbound left turn lane to Merrimount. Several citizens have suggested improved advanced signing to give drivers notice well in advance of the changes while others have suggested removing the improvements entirely and installing a traffic signal.

Options

Five options were analyzed and presented for discussion at the community meeting. A sixth option (option 3a) was identified by the community during the meeting as a possible hybrid option. In all, six options will be presented for discussion at the study session. These options are summarized below:

Option 1 – Modify the current installation and improve the aesthetics by removing the pylons and other “temporary” improvements and replace with permanent traffic islands. Improve the intersection lighting. Widen lanes at the intersection. Install additional advanced signing.

Option 2 – Install curb on the centerline of Island Crest Way to restrict left turns and through traffic at the intersection. Also install curb on the centerline of Island Crest Way at SE 46th Street to restrict left turns.

Option 3 – Modify the intersection to make it a more typical 3-lane cross section on Island Crest Way through the intersection. Install traffic markings in advance of the intersection to channel traffic to a single through lane (eliminating the current drop-lane configuration). Improve the intersection lighting. Install additional advanced signing.

Option 3a – Modify the intersection to as noted in Option 3, and add a traffic signal to facilitate through traffic across the intersection and left turns to SE 44th Street.

Option 4 – Install a traffic signal using the existing 4-lane roadway configuration. Widen lanes at the intersection. Modify Merrimount Drive roadway alignment to improve sight visibility and access at the intersection approach.

Option 5 – Install a traffic signal and widen Island Crest Way to add a left turn lane for both directions. Modify Merrimount Drive roadway alignment to improve sight visibility and access at the intersection approach.

Next Steps

Staff is seeking direction from Council tonight on a preferred option to include in the 2009-2014 TIP. The adopted 2008-2013 TIP includes a traffic signal project for this intersection with construction in 2010. Upon Council determination of a preferred option staff will include any changes in the draft 2009-2014 TIP which will be brought to Council on May 19th for a Public Hearing and adoption by Council on June 2nd.

RECOMMENDATION

Assistant City Engineer

MOVE TO: No formal action is required. Determine which improvement option to include in the 2009-2014 Transportation Improvement Plan.