



# Island Crest Way Citizen Panel Meeting Minutes

*December 9, 2008*

Community Center at Mercer View

*Attending:* Mark Berejka, Deborah Ehlers, Bryan Goode, Betty Harper, Jake Jacobson, Thomas Jones, Todd Kelsay, Scott Milburn, Peter Orser, Shawn Parry, Sam Sullivan, Bonnie Wojciehowskie, Eva Zemplenyi, Mayor Jim Pearman, Council Member Dan Grausz

*Excused:* Elliot Newman, Mary Stoll

*Project Team:* Assistant City Engineer Anne Tonella-Howe, Joe Giacobazzi and Jan Ciganik of KPG, Inc.

*Facilitation Team:* Steve Lancaster, Joy Johnston

## CALL TO ORDER

S. Lancaster called the meeting to order at 6:10 pm. The Citizen Panel, Project Team and Facilitation Team briefly introduced themselves.

## SCHEDULE

The next Citizen Panel meeting will take place on January 29 at 6 pm at the Community Center at Mercer View. The citizen involvement schedule was reviewed which includes the January 29 Citizen Panel meeting, a community meeting, and then a fourth meeting depending on the outcome of the community meetings. The plan is to present the Citizen Panel recommendation to the City Council in March 2009.

## MINUTES

**Members of the Citizen Panel were asked if they approved of the Minutes of the November 13, 2008 Meeting. There were no objections or changes.**

## REVIEW OF PROJECT GOALS

J. Giacobazzi reviewed the goals established by the City Council in the Island Crest Way Public Involvement Process Charter and approved by the Citizen Panel which include:

- Improve safety at key intersections (e.g. Merrimount)
- Maintain or improve travel times on and across the corridor (volumes and posted speed limits)
- Provide for safe pedestrian and bicycle use of the corridor.
- Develop solutions that are fiscally responsible.
- Remain consistent with sustainability language in the City's Comprehensive Plan specifically regarding start and stop issues.
- Analysis of Island Crest Way will include the evaluation of northbound and southbound peak periods.

## ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

Based on feedback received from the Citizen Panel at the November 13, 2008 Meeting and leading up to the December 9, 2008 meeting, KPG, Inc. provided drawings and analysis of nine alternatives:

- **A1:** Island Crest Way configured as a 4-lane road through the corridor. Outer lanes striped as shared bike lanes using "sharrows" and pedestrian crossing with touch signal just south of the Merrimount intersection. SE 44<sup>th</sup> St closed to outgoing and incoming traffic (cul-de-sac). Cost estimate: \$1,300,000
- **A2:** Island Crest Way configured as a 4-lane road through the corridor except at the Merrimount intersection where it would become a 5-lane road (adding northbound and southbound turn

lanes), SE 44<sup>th</sup> St. open to outgoing right turn traffic only and closed to incoming traffic. Cost estimate: \$2,300,000

- **B1:** Island Crest Way at Merrimount configured as it is currently but improved with roadway widening, signing, landscaping and a possible midblock pedestrian signal. SE 44<sup>th</sup> St. open to outgoing right turn traffic only and closed to incoming traffic. Cost estimate: \$570,000
- **B2:** Island Crest Way at Merrimount configured as it is currently but improved with roadway widening, signing, and landscaping. Also, the roadway section between Merrimount Drive and 86<sup>th</sup> Ave SE restriped to a 3-lane configuration. SE 44<sup>th</sup> St. open to outgoing right turn traffic only and closed to incoming traffic. Cost estimate: \$460,000
- **C1:** Island Crest Way configured as a 3-lane road through the corridor. SE 44<sup>th</sup> St. open to outgoing right turn traffic only and closed to incoming traffic. Cost estimate: \$460,000
- **C2:** Island Crest Way configured as a 3-lane road south of the Merrimount intersection and 4-lane road north of the Merrimount intersection. SE 44<sup>th</sup> St. open to outgoing right turn traffic only and closed to incoming traffic. Cost estimate: \$480,000
- **D1:** Install a signal at the Merrimount intersection. Island Crest Way configured as a 3-lane road through the corridor. SE 44<sup>th</sup> St. open to all outgoing and incoming traffic. Cost estimate: \$700,000
- **D2:** Install a signal at the Merrimount intersection. Island Crest Way configured as a 4-lane road through the corridor. SE 44<sup>th</sup> St. open to all outgoing and incoming traffic. Cost estimate: \$1,500,000
- **D3:** Install a signal at the Merrimount intersection. Island Crest Way configured as a 4-lane road through the corridor except at the Merrimount intersection where it would become a 5-lane road (adding northbound and southbound turn lanes). SE 44<sup>th</sup> St. open to all outgoing and incoming traffic. Cost estimate: \$2,200,000

NOTE: The project boundaries as defined in the Charter are the Island Crest Way corridor and its cross-street intersections, not to extend beyond SE 42nd Street to the north and Landsdowne Lane to the south.

*Discussion:*

- S. Parry [re: A1] asked whether the City could condemn the private road just south of 44<sup>th</sup> in order to make a through route for 44<sup>th</sup> traffic [if closed to Island Crest Way]. J. Giacobazzi indicated that it might be possible, but would be very expensive.
- B. Goode [re: A1] asked if closing SE 44<sup>th</sup> would solve any problems. J. Giacobazzi said it would solve some safety problems, but there would still be left and right turns from Merrimount which have other safety issues.
- S. Milburn [re: A1] asked if it was necessary to construct a cul-de-sac and requested further exploration into what would be allowable by code if 44<sup>th</sup> is closed.
- E. Zemplenyi [re: A2] asked whether it would be necessary to widen the road as much as shown on the graphic. J. Giacobazzi explained that the requirements for road widening and tapering rates are determined by the speed of the road.
- S. Parry asked about the baseline travel rate for all alternatives. J. Giacobazzi explained that the A1 alternative travel rate of 204 seconds (3.4 minutes) at peak travel times between 53<sup>rd</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> would be the closest to a baseline travel rate.
- T. Kelsay [re: B1] asked what the intention of the sidewalks would be. J. Giacobazzi said that the sidewalks would coincide with the crosswalk but would not be continuous along Island Crest Way, assuming that people would use side streets as needed.
- B. Goode [re: B1] asked if the sidewalks were therefore to make the crosswalks more functional and J. Giacobazzi confirmed that was the intention.
- J. Jacobson, in response to the claim that the current configuration operates as a 3-lane road, said that he disagrees. He said that he sees drivers frequently cutting in or driving too close to prevent other drivers from cutting in and thinks it is getting dangerous.
- D. Ehlers said that adding cyclists to this mix seems dangerous. J. Giacobazzi explained that cyclists would have their own dedicated lane in the 3-lane alternatives.
- B. Wojciehowskie [re: B2] said that the dedicated center left turn lane would be useful for getting to 86<sup>th</sup> and would also stop the jockeying
- B. Goode [re: C1] asked if this alternative would create diversion into side streets. J. Giacobazzi said that based on the analysis, the diversion would not be significant.
- J. Pearman asked how the travel time in the analysis correlates with speed on Island Crest Way. J. Giacobazzi and J. Ciganik said that their studies showed speeds averaging 35 mph, slightly slower during peak travel times. The northbound speed is generally highest at the crest of the hill.

- E. Zemplenyi asked if garbage trucks would cause back ups in the 3-lane configuration. J. Giacobazzi said that in other places with similar configurations, drivers typically use the center turn lane to go around stopped trucks.
- T. Kelsay, looking at the analysis chart provided, asked if the group could disregard the travel times since none of the travel times wildly diverges from the others.
- T. Jones said that travel times should not be disregarded.
- M. Berejka said that the travel times are almost equal so that is a factor that could be checked off the list. The Panel briefly discussed speed modeling.
- E. Zemplenyi [re: C1] asked what is at the top of the design (cut off on the page). J. Giacobazzi said that the road transitions into 4 lanes.
- D. Ehlers [re: C2] asked if it is dangerous to have bike lanes, especially going southbound near Merrimount since cars would be crossing Island Crest Way to turn left
- B. Goode asked why the travel time was more delayed in C1 than C2.

**The Panel discussed C1 and C2 and decided to add another alternative:**

- **C3:** Island Crest Way configured as a 3-lane road south of the Merrimount intersection and 4-lane road north of the Merrimount intersection. The southbound section north of Merrimount configured as shown in B2, with widening for a right-turn only lane onto Merrimount. SE 44<sup>th</sup> St. open to outgoing right turn traffic only and closed to incoming traffic. Cost estimate: \$630,000
- D. Grausz [re: D1-D3] asked how it is possible that the delay due to a traffic signal is only a few seconds compared to the alternatives without a signal. . Giacobazzi and J. Ciganik said that the times are an average because some drivers would get stopped by the light and others would not. Also, the signal would favor north/south travel on Island Crest Way rather than the side streets.
- P. Orser asked why a signal is being considered.
- M. Berejka said that in talking to others, people intuitively believe that a signal is the most efficient, most safe way to improve the intersection, but most people do not have the benefit of the modeling and analysis.
- P Orser asked what the benefits of a signal might be. J. Giacobazzi said that signals slow down traffic, so in that sense, there are some safety benefits. A signal would also allow the side street connections to be possible.
- T. Kelsay asked if the City's insurance company would have a preference. J. Giacobazzi said that the insurance company would probably approve of a signal but did not think there would necessarily be a preference for a signal.
- B. Harper [re: D1-D3] said that a signal would make turns onto Island Crest Way easier because there would be a break in the traffic.
- M. Berejka [re: D1-D3] asked if there is a hazard in having a signal located just around a bend in the road.
- S. Parry said that it doesn't seem like there would be much of a difference compared to how it was before or is now and said he doesn't think it is possible to accommodate every possible mistake a driver might make.
- T. Jones said that a signal doesn't seem necessary because the current configuration has reduced speeds on Island Crest Way and made the intersection safer. He also said that the Panel shouldn't be making decisions based on peak travel times only because there are 24 hours in the day.
- S. Lancaster checked in with the Panel regarding the process. The Panel discussed the term "fiscally responsible" as one of the goals outlined in the Charter. Council members Grausz and Pearman said there is a limited amount of funds available for this project and if the Panel selects the most expensive option, then this project would displace other City projects. The Panel decided for the moment to focus on other goals in analyzing the alternatives.
- M. Berejka asked why A1 is the only alternative that closes SE 44<sup>th</sup> St. He said that the right turn from 44<sup>th</sup> seems dangerous. Several members of the Panel responded that there aren't very many east-west connections on Mercer Island and that this is an important area to maintain access.
- S. Milburn repeated his request for more review of the cul-de-sac requirement.
- P. Orser asked if visibility from 44<sup>th</sup> onto Island Crest Way is the issue and if a retaining wall would help. J. Giacobazzi said that the sightlines are adequate for the speed, but that the problem was drivers traveling over the speed limit.
- The Panel again discussed project costs and the term "fiscally responsible." Council has set aside about \$500,000 for the project.
- The Panel discussed whether or not there was interest in a traffic signal. While most of the Panel indicated opposition to a signal, at least two panelists were in support and others were unsure. It was decided to maintain the signal alternatives for the time being.

J. Jacobson said that he is in favor of a light because it helps with the cross connections, getting in and out of driveways, and safety.

The Panel discussed whether one of the light alternatives could be eliminated.

**Members of the Citizen Panel agreed to eliminate D1 from the list of alternatives.**

The Panel then discussed if C1 or C2 could be eliminated because of the addition of C3.

**Members of the Citizen Panel agreed to eliminate C1 and C2 from the list of alternatives.**

The Panel discussed B1 and B2.

D. Ehlers said that she would not support a 3-lane configuration.

M. Berejka said that he thought a 4-lane option would encourage racing and passing.

S. Sullivan said that a 3-lane option would help people getting in and out of driveways along Island Crest Way.

E. Zemplenyi said that she doesn't see drivers weaving in and out and doesn't think this is a problem.

J. Pearman said that one of the biggest complaints he hears is about drivers behaving badly on Island Crest Way. Configurations that do traffic calming could help take care of that.

The Panel discussed if there are further alternatives that could be eliminated.

**Members of the Citizen Panel agreed to eliminate B1 from the list of alternatives.**

Materials needed prior to the next meeting were summarized as follows:

- Further analysis and possibly other options for A1
- A graphic of the new alternative C3
- Examples of roads in the area that have been converted from 4 to 3 lanes
- Information about "road diets"
- A new analysis matrix for the members of the Citizen Panel to rank the alternatives and submit before the next meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

S. Lancaster then opened the floor to those who were not on the Citizen Panel at 8:55 pm.

Lloyd Gilman said that traveling southbound on Island Crest Way, he has almost hit cars turning left from Merrimount. He also said that the Citizen Panel did not discuss important goals such as safety until the end of the meeting. [Mr. Gilman arrived 40 minutes late to the meeting and missed the review of goals at the beginning of the meeting.]

Ira Appelman said that the City Council wants a 2-lane configuration and that is the only reason that the Citizens Panel is meeting. He said that the City Council wants bike lanes and that the City Council can always find money for what they want to do. He said that a political decision is being forced on the Citizens Panel and that nobody is talking about turning Island Crest Way into a 2-lane road all the way to I-90 because more people live in the north end of the Island than the south end.

The public comment portion of the meeting concluded at 9:02 pm.

**FINAL COMMENTS**

The Project Team agreed to pull together further materials for the Panel prior to the next meeting on January 29.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.