



Department Source: Public Works

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: October 17, 2022

Re: Public Hearing for the Construction of the Ash Street Improvement Project.

Executive Summary

Public hearing to consider the construction of improvements along Ash Street between Providence Road and Clinkscales Road in central Columbia. The initial Interested Parties (IP) meeting was held on March 8, 2022 and a second IP meeting was held on July 26, 2022. In addition, walk-throughs of the project corridor were held on the afternoons of April 14 and April 30, 2022. The total budget for this project (design, easements, utilities, and construction) is \$2,600,000.

Discussion

The Ash Street improvement project was initiated following the passage of the quarter-cent sales tax proposition in August 2015 which allocated funds for capital improvement projects related to streets and sidewalks. Ash Street is defined as a major collector in the Columbia Area Transportation Study Organization (CATSO) Major Roadway Plan. The Ash Street improvement project may potentially include pedestrian and bicycle improvements, intersection improvements, or a combination of both types of improvements.

Bartlett & West, Inc. is providing design services for the Ash Street Improvement project. The design services are to be completed in two separate phases. Phase 1 includes a corridor study, development of concept plans, and the public engagement process to determine the best improvement option for the corridor. Phase 2 services will include the completion of right of way plans and final plans and specifications for construction of the desired improvements determined from the Phase 1 process.

As part of the Phase 1 services, concept plans were developed to include pedestrian and bicycle improvements, intersection improvements, or a combination of both types of improvements. The concept plans for pedestrian and bicycle improvements include a continuous multi-use wide sidewalk along the north side of the road, a continuous sidewalk and bike lane along the south side of the road, and crosswalks. The intersection improvements include single-lane roundabouts or improving the existing 4-way stops. Funding is not available to complete all the proposed improvements; therefore, citizens were asked to comment on their desired improvements for the project.

Public Engagement Process:

As part of the public engagement process, the initial Interested Parties (IP) meeting was held on March 8, 2022 and a second IP meeting was held on July 26, 2022. In addition, a walk-through to meet with citizens who owned property adjacent to Ash Street was held on April 14, 2022 and a walk-through to meet with the West Ash Neighborhood Association was held



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on April 30, 2022. Each of the walk-throughs were also open to anyone interested in walking the corridor and asking questions about the project. The design consultant and city engineering staff attended each of the IP meetings and the walk-throughs. Finally, this project is featured on the city's Be Heard webpage where citizens can learn about the proposed project and leave comments.

The proposed pedestrian and bicycle concept plans for the initial IP meeting included a continuous 10-foot wide sidewalk at back of curb along the north side of Ash Street and a continuous bike lane and 5-foot wide sidewalk along the south side of the road. The concept plans also included pedestrian crosswalks with rapid flashing beacons at Redwood Road, at Anderson Avenue, and at Aldeah Avenue. The proposed intersection concept plans included 100-foot diameter single-lane roundabouts or improving the 4-way stops with pedestrian islands and additional stop signs. Intersection improvements were proposed for the Clinkscales Road intersection, the West Boulevard intersection, and the Garth Avenue intersection. Citizens reviewed the various concept plans, discussed the plans with the consultant and city staff, and provided comments. Fifty-nine citizens signed in for attending the initial IP meeting and 34 written comments were received.

The two projects walk-throughs were held in April. The consultant and city staff walked the length of the project with interested residents to physically look at how the proposed improvements would affect properties and work within the constraints of the corridor. The first walk-through was for citizens that owned property along Ash Street to discuss how the proposed improvements could affect their properties. The second walk-through was for the West Ash Neighborhood Association to generally discuss the improvements along the corridor and how the constraints of the corridor affect the design. Each of the walk-throughs were attended by a variety of interested citizens that wanted to learn more about the project. Some citizens walked the length of the corridor and others walked the area of the corridor where they were most interested in the improvements.

After compiling comments from the initial IP meeting and the two walk-throughs, the second IP meeting was held. For this meeting, the consultant revised the pedestrian and bicycle concept plans based on input gathered from the initial IP meeting and the walk-throughs. The revised concept plans reduced the width of the proposed sidewalk along the north side of Ash Street to 8 feet wide and added a 3-foot wide grass buffer between the sidewalk and the curb. This concept reflects the city's standard 8-foot wide sidewalk with grass parkway on one side of the road for collector streets. The intersection concept plans remained essentially the same as used for the initial IP meeting. As with the initial IP meeting, citizens reviewed the various concept plans, discussed the plans with the consultant and city staff, and provided comments. Fifty-six citizens signed in for attending the second IP meeting and 37 written comments were received.

In general, a large variety of comments were received throughout the public engagement processes. From the public comments, the pedestrian and bicycle improvements were the most favored, but there was also support for each type of intersection improvement. In addition, there were comments requesting the City to not make any improvements.



Concerns generally included those related to minimizing tree loss and encroachment onto properties from the proposed improvements, making the sidewalks comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, safety for all users, snow removal/sidewalk maintenance, narrowing the road to reduce speeding, raising crosswalks, etc.

Recommendations and Funding:

For the Ash Street project, it is recommended to move forward with the final design and construction of pedestrian and bicycle improvements as represented in the second IP meeting concept plans. These improvements were favored in the public comments and it also furthers the city's commitment to prioritize walking and biking. If directed by Council for staff to complete final design for the pedestrian and bicycle improvements, the consultant can design the final plans to consider minimizing tree loss and encroachment on properties, and reducing the road width while working within the constraints of utilities and designing for safety of all road users along the corridor.

The intersection improvements, which was the initial purpose of the project per the 2015 Capital Improvement Sales Tax (CIST) ballot list, are proposed here to be a long term future improvement project for the corridor. While this could be considered with the 2025 CIST, it appears much more likely, based on the data, that it will be a discussion for the 2035 CIST.

Two different types of intersection improvements were proposed, roundabouts or improved stop control. The roundabout concept included a small diameter traditional single lane roundabout with the pedestrian island and the landscaped center island. The improved stop control concept included pedestrian islands and additional stop signs. Each type of intersection improvement was discussed at the IP meetings and the walk-throughs. Each of the intersection improvements would require widening each leg of the intersection impacting the adjacent properties to accommodate the additional improvements. At the initial IP meeting the consultant shared a Traffic Volumes at Intersections diagram that graphically represented traffic counts that were taken at the intersections in January of 2022 and projects traffic counts at the intersections in 20 years.

Roundabouts are the recommended long term improvement for each of the intersections due to the safety features for both the pedestrians and the motor vehicles. The proposed pedestrian and bicycle improvements will be designed to limit rework in the future at the intersections. The safety features of the roundabout include:

- A pedestrian crossing a leg of a 4-way stop intersection faces four potential vehicular conflicts, each coming from a different leg of the intersection. A pedestrian crossing a leg of a roundabout will face two potential vehicular conflicts and each conflict point will be at a separate time. The first potential conflict will be coming from the left, with a refuge on the median island, before facing the other potential conflict, which will be coming from the right.
- The geometry of roundabouts provide for slow entry speeds and consistent speeds through the roundabout by using deflection. This results in fewer and less severe collisions.



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- The vehicular speeds are lower and the crosswalks are set back at the roundabout to allow drivers more time to react to pedestrians while merging into or out of the roundabout which reduces the consequences of error.
- A single-lane roundabout has 75% fewer vehicle conflict points compared to the 4-way stop and eliminate left turns thus eliminating the more severe collisions caused by left-turn movements.
- Roundabouts bring conflicting traffic streams into a steady flow and allow vehicles to merge without the stop-and-go conditions.

The total project budget for the improvements is \$2,600,000, which includes design, easement acquisition, utility relocation, and construction costs. The estimated construction cost for each of the improvement options are as follows:

- Pedestrian and bicycle improvements: \$2,758,000.
- Roundabout improvements: \$550,000 per intersection.
- 4-way stop improvements: \$365,000 per intersection.

Due to the project budget constraints, public input, and traffic numbers it is recommended to only complete the pedestrian and bicycle improvements at this time. Since the construction estimate for the pedestrian and bicycle improvements is greater than the project budget, it is recommended to design all the proposed pedestrian and bicycle improvements between Clinkscales Road and Providence Boulevard, but to bid the project as a phased approach with bid alternates. Staff will also work to increase the project budget through various funding sources in order to increase the amount of pedestrian and bicycle improvements that can be constructed with this project.

Project Timeline:

If directed by Council to move forward with the project, Phase 2, which is completion of right of way plans and final plans and specifications, will be completed by Bartlett & West. This phase of the project will include completing a topographic survey of the corridor, drafting permanent sidewalk easement and temporary construction easement descriptions, coordinating with utilities, and developing bid ready plans and specifications.

The acquisition of easement by the City is anticipated to be completed during the spring and summer of 2023. The completion of final plans and bid of the project is anticipated to be completed over the winter of 2023/2024. The construction of the project is anticipated to be completed spring through fall of 2024.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: The budget for this project (design, easement acquisition, utility relocations, and construction) is \$2,600,000 and will be funded from the ¼-cent Capital Improvement Program (CIP) sales tax.

Long-Term Impact: Routine Maintenance



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Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Reliable Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Safe Neighborhoods, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Mobility, Connectivity, and Accessibility, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History

Date	Action
11/01/2022	R172-21 Authorizing an agreement for professional services with Barlett & West, Inc. for design services relating to nonmotorized/pedestrian and intersection improvements along Ash Street, between Providence Road and Clinkscales Road.

Suggested Council Action

Approve the construction of improvements along Ash Street between Providence Road and Clinkscales Road.