



Memorandum

DATE: December 19, 2005

TO: Aurora Business Team

FROM: Kirk McKinley, Aurora & Interurban Trail Program Manager
Kris Overleese, P.E., Capital Projects Manager

RE: Aurora Corridor Project (N 165th - N 205th Street)
History and Direction

The purpose of this memo is to update the Aurora Business Team (ABT) on the progress and status of the planning for the next two miles of the Aurora Corridor Project (N 165th - N 205th Street). [The first mile of the Aurora Corridor Project (N 145th - N 165th Street) is currently under construction and is anticipated to be complete by the end of 2006]. There are two attachments to this memo and they visually depict:

- Typical existing Aurora cross section (before construction),
- N 145th to N 165th Street cross section under construction
- Pre-design recommended cross section
- Pre-design recommended cross section to current state standards

The project's pre-design study will be discussed later in this memo.

Public Outreach and Pre-Environmental Process (POP)

On April 18, 2005, Council approved the process to begin design and environmental work on the Aurora Corridor Project (N 165th - N 205th Street). The first phase of this project is the Public Outreach and Pre-environmental (POP) phase. The goal of this phase is to continue an aggressive outreach effort for input from property owners, business owners, the community and our partners; collect baseline project data (traffic, water quality, economic information, etc); create draft alignment options; and determine the appropriate level of environmental documentation for the project. The collection of baseline data will assist with the creation of the draft alignment options. The draft alignment options are to be shared with Council and the community early in 2006. Once the draft alignments are reviewed, staff will work with our funding partners (state and

federal) to determine the appropriate level of environmental documentation for the project. The formal environmental process for the project is anticipated to begin the spring of 2006.

POP Community Open House #1: The first open house of the POP process was held on August 17, 2005, and was attended by approximately 70 residents, property owners and business owners. Attendees were able to review project information boards and a presentation was given by the Aurora and Interurban Program Manager Kirk McKinley. The presentation was followed by an open floor question/answer (Q/A) session. The water quality of Echo Lake and stormwater control were priorities for meeting attendees. Attendees were also concerned about balancing goals of protecting existing businesses (minimizing impacts) and the project's facilitation of long term economic growth. The meeting attendees were also concerned about the community's ability to comment on the proposed environmental process. The second open house will be held after Council review of the alignment options.

Ongoing One-On-One Meetings with Property Owners: Beginning in 2004, staff has been meeting with property owners along Aurora Avenue between N 165th and N 205th Streets to discuss this segment of the Aurora Corridor project. The goal of these property owner meetings is to give staff an opportunity to answer property owner questions and to learn about site specific project concerns. These meetings will continue in 2006 until all property owners have been reached. To date, staff has met with almost all of the owners. Typical property owner concerns include: impacts during construction, business access, parking, signage, driveway aprons, and maintaining property visibility. Staff believes most property owners understand the need for the project and support it.

Environmental Reports: We do not yet know the level of environmental analysis or process we will follow for the Aurora Avenue (N 165th – N 205th Street) project. A DCE (Documented Categorical Exclusion) is utilized for projects with anticipated minimal environmental impacts needing Federal Environmental Review. The next level of environmental documentation is an Environmental Assessment (EA) with an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as the highest level of review. Once the current Public Outreach/Pre-Environmental (POP) process is completed early next year, staff will coordinate with our funding partners the WSDOT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to determine the appropriate level of environmental review to recommend to Council.

The Federal Agencies have stated that they will not participate in funding a higher level of environmental analysis than they believe is appropriate. Most of the jurisdictions along Aurora Avenue N in the Puget Sound Region have utilized the DCE process. The City used an EA process for Aurora N 145th – N 165th Street. A DCE is used when there is only one primary design alternative, and when there aren't "major" environmental impacts. A public hearing is not required with a DCE (it is required with an EA), however staff has committed to conduct a public hearing should a DCE be selected. The POP process includes technical analysis of many of the environmental topic elements. We anticipate a high level of analysis and review of socio-economic and water quality

impacts beyond the typical approach regardless of the level of environmental review. The Aurora Business Team (ABT) will assist with identifying the information you believe is important to include in this review.

Project Background

There are several Shoreline policy actions and documents as well as regional plans that affect the design and implementation of improvements to the Aurora Corridor. The key documents, ordinances and resolutions in Shoreline that affect the design are the Comprehensive Plan, the Pre-Design Study (Resolution #156, including the 32 Points), and Ordinance #326 which directed all widening between 172nd and 192nd to occur on the east side of the corridor. Key regional and state guidance comes from the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, and state policies, design standards, and codes. A brief overview of some of this guidance is provided below.

Pre-Design Study: The Aurora Corridor Project Citizen Advisory Task Force (CATF) created the design concept for Aurora Avenue and the “32 Points” through an extensive public involvement process. On August 23, 1999, Council voted unanimously to accept the recommendations of the project’s CATF through adoption of Resolution #156. Resolution #156 adopted the design concept (as outlined in the pre-design study report) for the three mile section of Aurora (N 145th to N 205th Street) which includes Business Access Transit (BAT) lanes, standard sidewalk and amenity zone widths, a landscaped median for safety, and other design elements including recommendations for new traffic signal locations. The basic design concept identified in the Pre-Design study is being implemented in the Aurora 145th to 165th project currently under construction. The Council also adopted the “32 Points” which provide guidance and flexibility during the design and implementation to minimize impacts to existing businesses.

The project will add north and southbound BAT lanes to improve capacity. A median barrier will be required to improve safety by reducing vehicle collision potential with defined access points. Left and u-turn opportunities will be provided at intersections and median breaks. Sidewalk and amenity/utility zones will be continuous on both sides of Aurora Avenue N in addition to other pedestrian improvements. Staff recommends carrying the reduced sidewalk width of 7 feet (City code requires 8 feet) forward into this segment of Aurora Avenue N. Driveways will be consolidated at logical locations and formal streetscape and landscape enhancements will be created. The project scope also includes analyzing opportunities to provide business access to signalized intersections for left turns through alleys, parking lots and other methods.

“32 Points”: The Aurora Corridor Project (N 165th - N 205th Street) design, like the current project from N 145th to N 165th Street, is based on the pre-design work (1998-1999) for the entire Aurora Corridor. The “32 Points” were developed by the CATF and are guidelines for use during the design and implementation process and are intended to provide project flexibility to minimize impacts to businesses while meeting the project goals. These “32 Points” were successfully utilized during design and construction of the first mile of the Aurora Corridor Project (N 145th – N 165th Street). For example: The

“32 Points” recommended left and u-turn opportunities every 800-1000 feet and the final project design provides for left and u-turn opportunities an average of every 350 feet. The first mile also includes 7 locations where the sidewalk has narrower interim widths to avoid significant business property or parking impacts. The “32 Points” was handed out at the first ABT meeting.

Ordinance 326: Council adopted Ordinance 326 at their July 14, 2003 meeting as an amendment to the City’s Comprehensive Plan. This ordinance ensures that right of way widening between N 172nd and N 192nd Streets will occur to the east if additional right of way is needed. This commitment is an important part of the project and provides certainty to the businesses on the west side of Aurora Avenue in this segment of the corridor. It also takes advantage of ten blocks of publicly owned Seattle City Light right of way to widen into (if needed) instead of private property. This commitment will require that staff continue close coordination with Seattle City Light as they own the property adjacent to Aurora from approximately N 178th - N 188th Street.

Project Goals

The goals for the Aurora Corridor Project (N 165th - N 205th Street) are in keeping with those for the Aurora Corridor Project (N 145th - N 165th Street) – to improve the safety of all users of Aurora with improved channelization, access management, pedestrian amenities, and regional multimodal mobility for now and the future. In addition, the project goals support the community goals set forth in the Comprehensive Plan including the need to improve the economic development potential (existing and future businesses), enhance the livability of the communities adjacent to the corridor, and develop a project that supports planned land uses and regional transportation demands. Specific goals include:

- **Vehicular and Pedestrian Safety:** Aurora has been identified by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) as a high crash corridor for both vehicles and pedestrians. The project needs to improve safety for pedestrians, vehicles and people with physical challenges through access management, provision of pedestrian sidewalks, crossings, and Americans with Disabilities (ADA) design components. Because Aurora Avenue N is a State highway, the improvements to Aurora must meet state WSDOT design standards for channelization and access management. During design of the Aurora Corridor Project (N 145th - N 165th Street) staff worked with WSDOT to gain approval for some deviations to the design standards for such items as BAT lane width reductions, left and u-turn curb configurations, and for shifts of the alignments through intersections to minimize property impacts.

Staff met with WSDOT engineering staff in November of 2005 and they indicated they would likely grant similar deviations to the design standards. Staff asked WSDOT’s engineering staff if there was a change in WSDOT requirements for access control and were told that access control is required.

- **Economic Development:** Existing conditions along Aurora Avenue N include traffic congestion, unsafe pedestrian facilities, lack of driveway definition, areas of aging commercial strip development, as well as some recent redevelopment projects. The project needs to enhance the appeal of the street and infrastructure to support existing and future business development. Improving transit and pedestrian facilities will be beneficial to business development linking areas of higher concentration of commercial development. The undergrounding of overhead utilities will also improve the “doorstep” of the commercial businesses.
- **Roadway Capacity and Efficiency:** Aurora has several intersections in operational failure during the peak hours. The project goals are to improve capacity and safety by optimizing and coordinating signal timing. Access management features and BAT lanes will improve capacity by reducing uncertainty and removing conflicts. The project will also examine methods to improve access to businesses.
- **Multi-modal and Regional System Connections:** Aurora is classified as a Highway of Statewide Significance, and is part of the National Highway System (NHS). As that, it serves a regional function to carry regional automobile and truck traffic and serve as a regional transit corridor. Highway 99 (Aurora Avenue N) in Shoreline connects to SR 104 at the north border of Shoreline (N 205th Street) and to SR 523 (N 145th Street) at the south border. It also ties in to the recently completed Snohomish County SR 99 project, and links to the City of Seattle project that is currently in design.

Design - Next Steps

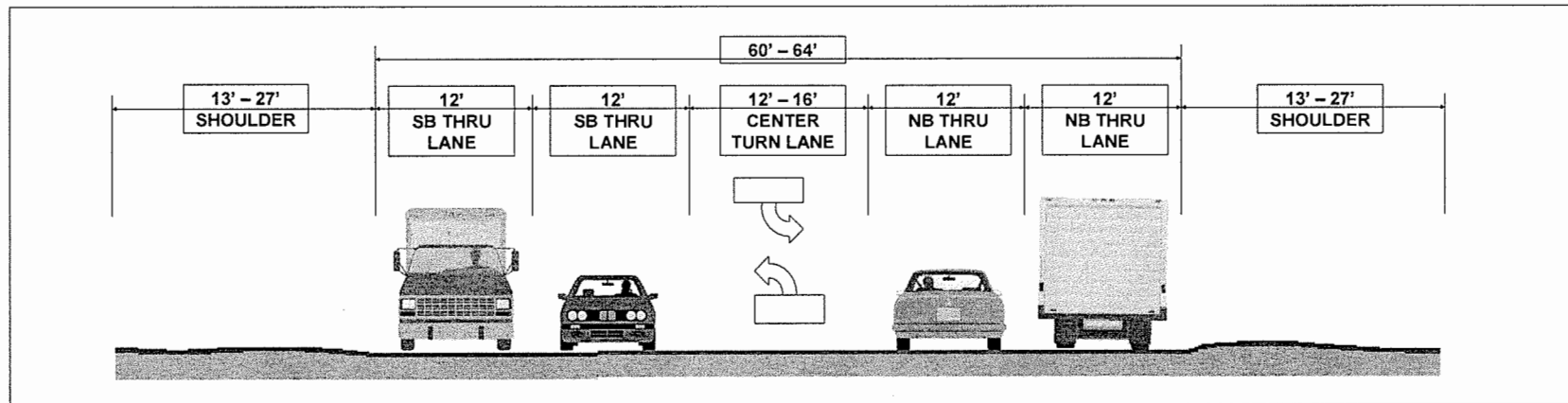
Staff is working to create draft alignments based on the 110 foot cross section (design direction from Council based on the adopted pre-design study). The draft alignments will be reviewed by the ABT and then go before Council early in 2006. Staff will then work with the community to review the alignments and quantify impacts of the alignments. In conjunction with our funding partners, staff will recommend an environmental process to Council after alignment review.

Attachments (2): Aurora cross section options

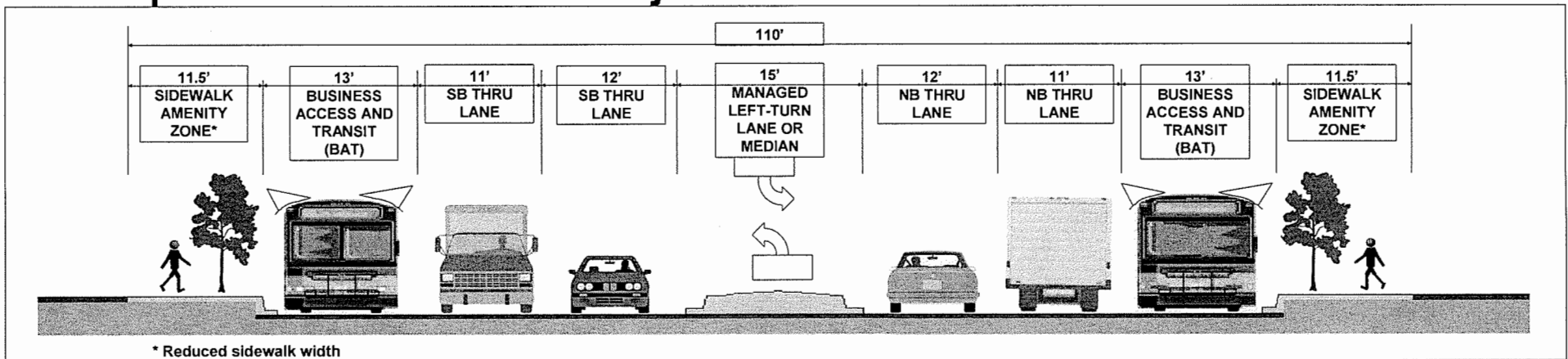
Aurora Ave N – N 165th St to N 205th St Typical Existing Roadway Cross Section



■ Typical Existing



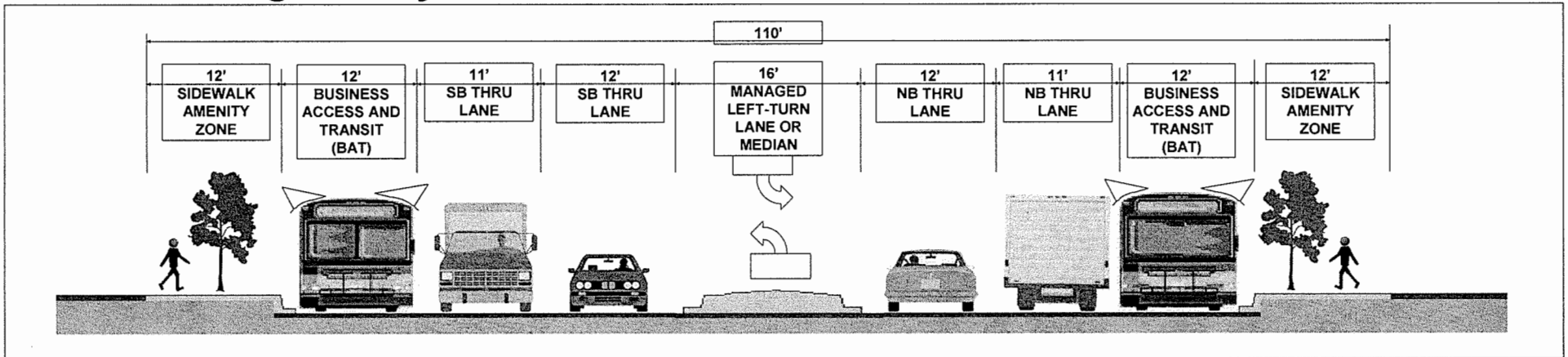
■ Implemented on 145-165 Project



Aurora Ave N – N 165th St to N 205th St Pre-Design Cross Sections



■ Pre-Design Study



■ Pre-Design Study – Updated to Current WSDOT Standards

