

## CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

Identification of Council's preferred Grand Connection Interstate 405 crossing alternative and direction on next steps.

Mac Cummins AICP, Director, 452-6191

Emil A. King AICP, Strategic Planning Manager, 452-7223

*Community Development Department*

## DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

### DIRECTION

Staff is seeking direction on Council's preferred Interstate 405 crossing alternative for the Grand Connection and concurrence on recommended next steps, including completion of environmental review in the Wilburton Commercial Area Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and other identified next steps.

## RECOMMENDATION

Direct staff to proceed with *Alternative 3 – Lid Park* as Council's preferred Grand Connection Interstate 405 crossing, including completion of Final EIS review and other identified next steps.

## BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

In December 2015 City Council launched the Wilburton–Grand Connection planning initiative. The Grand Connection is a Council Priority initiative to establish a vision for a non-motorized corridor that connects from Meydenbauer Bay, through Downtown Bellevue, and across Interstate 405 into the Wilburton Study Area to meet up with the Eastside Rail Corridor. The Grand Connection will add a unique and signature element to Bellevue's urban landscape and create opportunities for a new land use, mobility and urban design vision for the Wilburton Area. The Council-appointed Wilburton Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) completed their work in April and transmitted their vision document and accompanying recommendations to Council on July 2. Council discussed the Wilburton CAC's work on July 2 and described its intent to provide direction to staff regarding next steps for the Wilburton Study Area later this year. The Wilburton CAC envisions the Wilburton Study Area as a dense and vibrant neighborhood that capitalizes on initiatives such as the Eastside Rail Corridor and the Grand Connection to create a unique and memorable community.

### Grand Connection Vision Framework and Implementation

#### *Sequence One – Meydenbauer Bay/Old Bellevue to Civic Center*

Following an extensive community engagement and visioning phase, Council directed staff to proceed with work relating to the *Grand Connection Framework Plan: Sequence One* in December 2017 that established the high-level vision for the corridor between Meydenbauer Bay/Old Bellevue and the Downtown Civic Center District. The Plan includes key strategies regarding aesthetic enhancements such as paving, weather protection, intersections, art and culture, and trees and vegetation; as well as concepts for key public space locations and mobility within Downtown. At that time, Council initiated

Comprehensive Plan Amendments (CPAs), relevant Land Use Code Amendments (LUCAs), and the development of design guidelines for this segment of the Grand Connection within Downtown. Policy amendments are part of the 2018 Annual CPA process. LUCAs and design guidelines are anticipated for review by the Bellevue Planning Commission beginning in 2019.

#### *Sequence Two – Interstate 405 Crossing*

The *Grand Connection Framework Plan: Sequence Two – Interstate 405 Crossing* released in May 2018 presents schematic design concepts for the Interstate 405 crossing segment of the Grand Connection and its interface with the Wilburton Commercial Area and the Eastside Rail Corridor.

The three Grand Connection Interstate 405 crossing alternatives include:

- *Alternative 1 – Sculptural Bridge*
- *Alternative 2 – Linear Bridge*
- *Alternative 3 – Lid Park*

Staff previously discussed the Grand Connection Interstate 405 crossing alternatives with Council on:

- **March 13, 2017 Study Session:** Staff presented preliminary models and renderings of the Interstate 405 crossing. Council expressed support for how the design elements were coming along and looked forward to future refinements. There was also discussion of how a phased approach may be possible for the crossing.
- **June 19, 2017 Study Session:** Staff reviewed draft renderings of the Interstate 405 crossing alternatives with Council which detailed design elements, planning-level cost estimates, opportunities for programming, and impact on the Wilburton Study Area, Eastside Rail Corridor, and future development. Council expressed interest in further refinements to the cost estimates and review of the environmental analysis of the alternatives in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to be released in February 2018.
- **May 14, 2018 Study Session:** Staff distributed and provided an overview of the *Grand Connection Framework Plan: Sequence Two – Interstate 405 Crossing* and indicated a return visit to Council later in the year to select a preferred alternative. Council expressed interest in the overall design approaches for the crossing options, as well as the interface of each crossing alternative with the Wilburton Study Area and the existing Pedestrian Corridor within Downtown.

The *Grand Connection Framework Plan: Sequence Two – Interstate 405 Crossing* details the evolution of the three Interstate 405 crossing alternatives, and a full description of each design including; materials, public open space, relationship to future development in Downtown Bellevue and the Wilburton Study Area, and comparative summaries of travel distance, planning-level cost estimates, and sustainability strategies. The report concludes with a comparison of alternatives based on elements reviewed as part of the Wilburton Commercial Area DEIS released in February 2018. Council's preferred Interstate 405 crossing would be included in the Final Environmental Impact Statement planned for issuance in mid-2019. The Draft EIS and Final EIS would constitute the environmental review at this planning stage.

The range of factors evaluated in the Interstate 405 crossing alternative analysis, include:

- Create a signature piece of infrastructure that is visually dynamic and iconic.
- Pursue opportunities to create public space on or adjacent to the crossing.
- Create a safe and comfortable crossing for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Mitigate the impacts, including sights and sounds of Interstate 405.
- Interface with the future Eastside Rail Corridor.
- Integrate with future development opportunities east and west of Interstate 405.
- Serve as a catalyst for development of the Wilburton Study Area vision.
- Planning-level cost estimates.
- Impacts to private and public property.

Information on the Interstate 405 crossing alternatives has been part of a robust community engagement process for the Grand Connection. In addition to the DEIS process, reports and design concepts have been available on the project and City websites. Online and in person open houses have been held, and many targeted presentations have been conducted with civic organizations, residents, and other interested parties such as the Bellevue Downtown Association, Chamber of Commerce, and key stakeholders.

The Grand Connection Interstate 405 crossing presents a unique opportunity to further enhance our network of non-motorized connections and public spaces, while serving as a catalyst for future change in the Wilburton Study Area and Downtown. The alternatives take different approaches to establishing a connection between Downtown, Wilburton, and the Eastside Rail Corridor.

Staff feels that *Alternative 3 – Lid Park* presents the best opportunity to have the Grand Connection Interstate 405 crossing be a unique, comfortable, and attractive route. It will catalyze adjacent development in both Downtown and Wilburton and add truly memorable new public spaces in Bellevue. The Lid Park allows us to plan now for a transformative addition to the City's landscape and provide for the future needs of the community.

One of the Council Principles regarding timing seeks to explore means by which key elements of the vision can be in place by the 2023 start of light rail service in Bellevue, including pedestrian connectivity across Interstate 405. This would be part of follow-up analysis regardless of which alternative is selected by Council.

Tonight, staff will present an overview of the Grand Connection Interstate 405 crossing alternatives and summarize public input received to date. Staff requests Council select a preferred Grand Connection crossing alternative so the following next steps can be accomplished.

### **Interstate 405 Crossing Next Steps**

1. **Design Refinement of Preferred Alternative:** The preferred design concept as selected by Council would be refined to further develop the design elements and perform preliminary engineering and structural analysis. Refinement of the planning-level cost estimates will be

accomplished as details of the crossing are developed at a greater level of detail. One of the key end products would be a refined proposal for the City's preferred crossing to advance partnership opportunities.

2. **Environmental Review:** Reflect Council's preferred Interstate 405 crossing in the Final EIS being completed for the Wilburton Commercial Area Study (planned for issuance in mid-2019).
3. **Continued Stakeholder and Public Engagement:** Significant interaction with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) will be required based on Council's preferred alternative. Interaction with adjacent property owners as well as other stakeholders will also be essential to maintain strong public engagement and ensure success for any of the crossing options.
4. **Identification of Funding Sources and Opportunities:** The Interstate 405 crossing will represent a significant cost, but one that could be achieved through a multitude of funding sources. Upon selection of a preferred alternative, the City should begin identifying funding opportunities as it could significantly impact the design refinement process.
5. **Identification of Property and Easement Needs:** Upon selection of a preferred alternative the City should identify all impacts to private and publicly-owned property. This should include necessary acquisition, easements and corresponding agreements (maintenance, access, utilities, etc.), and any opportunities for partnerships.

## POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

### Policy Impact

On December 7, 2015 Council approved the work plan for the Wilburton–Grand Connection planning initiative. The Grand Connection is identified as a Council Priority. In December 2017, Council directed staff to proceed with work relating to *Grand Connection Framework Plan: Sequence One*, initiating Comprehensive Plan amendments and code updates focused primarily within Downtown Bellevue. *Grand Connection Framework Plan: Sequence Two*, which examines crossing alternatives of Interstate 405 to Wilburton and the Eastside Rail Corridor, will complete the visioning framework of the Grand Connection and lead to the next steps of design refinement and implementation.

### Fiscal Impact

The Interstate 405 crossing will represent a significant cost, but one that could be achieved through a multitude of funding sources. Council direction tonight on a preferred Grand Connection Interstate 405 crossing will begin a process to refine the design and identify funding sources and opportunities.

## OPTIONS

1. Direct staff to proceed with *Alternative 1 – Sculptural Bridge* as Council's preferred Grand Connection Interstate 405 crossing, including completion of Final EIS review and other identified next steps.
2. Direct staff to proceed with *Alternative 2 – Linear Bridge* as Council's preferred Grand Connection Interstate 405 crossing, including completion of Final EIS review and other identified next steps.
3. Direct staff to proceed with *Alternative 3 – Lid Park* as Council's preferred Grand Connection Interstate 405 crossing, including completion of Final EIS review and other identified next steps.
4. Provide alternate direction to staff.

## **ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS**

- A. Wilburton–Grand Connection Project Council Principles
- B. Overall Grand Connection Route Map
- C. *Grand Connection Framework Plan: Sequence Two – Interstate 405 Crossing*

## **AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY**

*Grand Connection Framework Plan: Sequence One*