

March 13, 2017

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT

Update on the Grand Connection Visioning process.

STAFF CONTACTS

Dan Stroh, Acting Director, 452-5255

Bradley Calvert, Community Development Program Manager, 452-6930

Department of Planning & Community Development

POLICY ISSUES

On December 7, 2015, Council provided direction to proceed with the Wilburton-Grand Connection Land Use and Transportation project. This is a Council priority initiative. Tonight is one in a series of ongoing briefings to keep the Council apprised of progress along the way.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

ACTION



DIRECTION



INFORMATION ONLY



Staff will provide an update regarding 1) the alternatives for the Interstate 405 Crossing in response to additional engineering and connectivity analysis; 2) an update on public engagement responses to polls and surveys regarding the art and culture element of the Grand Connection, and 3) overall identity and design, including early implementation strategies.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

On December 7, 2015 City Council approved the work plan for the Wilburton-Grand Connection project. 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, to the Wilburton Commercial Area and Eastside Rail Corridor. The Grand Connection will serve as a unique and signature element to Bellevue's urban landscape, and will create opportunities for a new land use and urban design vision for the Wilburton Commercial Area.

A key feature of the Grand Connection will be the Interstate 405 Crossing. The connection presents an opportunity to establish connectivity between Downtown and the Wilburton Commercial Area, as well as creating an experience and public space. Tonight staff will provide updates on the development of the three alternatives for the I-405 crossing. These developments are in response to additional engineering and connectivity analysis, as well as engagement with stakeholders.

Public engagement has served as an essential element as the project has progressed. Staff has employed various means to engage the public and stakeholders, including focus groups, surveys, interviews, online open houses, and polls to assist in crafting a vision that the community can embrace. Tonight staff will

provide a summary of the most recent methods of engagement relating to the art and culture element and opinions regarding identity and design strategies.

In December 2016, Council approved Capital Investment Program Plan No. CD-44 for early implementation strategies of the Grand Connection. These strategies are intended to further advance the vision of the Grand Connection in relationship to physical improvements, design refinement, art and culture, and community inspired events. Tonight staff will provide an update on emerging opportunities for early implementation.

1. I-405 Crossing Alternatives

On October 24, 2016, staff provided an update to Council that exhibited the initial high level concepts for the I-405 crossing. The consultant has developed three alternatives that addressed the possible means to cross I-405 with tiered levels of complexity in regards to scale, route, and potential cost. Staff presented the high level concepts, as well as an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of each alternative.

Option One

- The first option consisted of a crossing that extended from NE 6th Street into the Wilburton Commercial Area. Its intent was to maintain direct sight lines and route between Downtown and the Wilburton Commercial Area. It created an opportunity to design a signature crossing that would incorporate a modest public space with minimal impact to private property. The illustration for Option One, as presented at the October 24th meeting, can be found in Attachment B.

Option Two

- The second option pursued a crossing between NE 4th and NE 6th Streets. The intent of this proposal was to create a level bridge with minimal grade change, while creating opportunities for public spaces that extended from the crossing. The concept presented opportunities to create a signature structure that allowed for multiple paths to connect into the Wilburton Commercial Area. This option also seeks to create opportunities to incorporate into future developments, such as podium rooftops. The illustration for Option Two, as presented at the October 24th meeting, can be found in Attachment C.

Option Three

- The third option presented a crossing that would establish a lid, or complete cover, of the interstate between NE 4th and NE 6th Streets. The concept would use construction techniques that would create barrel vaults over the existing on and off ramps for I-405 to create a rolling topography and provide for a large programmable space in the center of the lid. The elevation of the lid would seek to incorporate into future podium developments to the west and east of the interstate in an effort to create a seamless and continuous space from Downtown and into the Wilburton Commercial Area. The option would also include a narrow spur connection that would integrate into the Wilburton Commercial Area and the Eastside Rail Corridor. The illustration for Option Three, as presented at the October 24th meeting, can be found in Attachment D.

Tonight's Update

Following the October 24, 2016 Council Study Session, additional analysis on engineering limitations and design has continued. Tonight's presentation will include updated sketches of each of the three alternatives in response to new information from this analysis. These are receiving additional refinements as this agenda item is published and will be presented at tonight's meeting. The concepts remain at a conceptual level, and staff will be seeking feedback and input from Council in advance of the visions moving forward. The three alternatives will be incorporated as part of the Wilburton Commercial Area Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), later this year, to assist in identifying a preferred alternative.

2. Public Engagement

Art and culture is expected to be a defining element of the Grand Connection. In December 2016 and January 2017, staff conducted an art and culture online preference survey to better understand the types of art and culture that the public wanted to see incorporated into the route. The survey resulted in over 320 responses, and tonight staff will present the results of the survey and how they may inform visioning and implementation strategies going forward. Attachment E summarizes some of the findings from this survey.

3. Early Implementation

As part of the 2017–2018 budget, Council approved funding for early implementation strategies for the Grand Connection. Early implementation will support the vision and goals of the Grand Connection including placemaking, economic development, connectivity, and identity. Tonight staff will present potential emerging opportunities for early implementation strategies including physical improvements and programming events.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Grand Connection Long Term Route
- B. I-405 Crossing Alternative – Option One from October 24, 2016 Council Session
- C. I-405 Crossing Alternative – Option Two from October 24, 2016 Council Session
- D. I-405 Crossing Alternative – Option Three from October 24, 2016 Council Session
- E. Summary Infographic from the Grand Connection Art Survey

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N/A