



Comprehensive Summary Montrose-Wilson-Lawrence Community Meeting #2

The second of three community meetings requested by Alderman James Cappleman (Ward 46) regarding the Montrose Avenue-Wilson-Lawrence Avenue (MWL) corridor within the North Lake Shore Drive (NLSD) project area was held January 24, 2019 at the Larry McKeon Student Services Building at Truman College. The meeting was scheduled to run from 6 to 8 p.m. but breakout group discussions lasted until 8:45 p.m. The meeting was open to the general public and advertised through the Alderman's electronic newsletter. Attendees of the previous MWL community meeting held on October 17, 2018, were also sent a meeting notification via email.

From 6 to 6:30 p.m., attendees were able to examine several exhibits located around the room which displayed information on the project process, the feedback received at the first community meeting, the evaluation process and results, and the recommended finalist alternatives. At 6:30 p.m., Alderman Cappleman provided a brief introduction to the NLSD Phase I Study process and the associated series of MWL community meetings. Following this, a PowerPoint presentation was given in advance of breakout group discussion. The presentation reviewed the previous community meeting held for the Montrose-Wilson-Lawrence Avenue corridor, including the needs and issues identified by meeting attendees. It also provided an overview of the alternatives developed for the corridor and explained the project team's evaluation criteria and methodology. The presentation concluded with an examination of the results of the project team's evaluation and the four alternatives selected for additional analysis. Two ten-minute question-and-answer periods were provided during the presentation. Questions received concerned topics such as potential changes to ramp volumes, evaluation methodology, impacts to the local street grid west of NLSD and the current performance of the MWL junctions.

Following the presentation, attendees engaged in discussion at four breakout group tables. Attendees were not assigned to a specific table. Guided by the facilitator, the breakout groups reviewed large schematics of the four finalist alternatives for the MWL area that will undergo additional analysis. Attendees were asked to provide feedback on the designs and make suggestions as to how they could be improved. Comments were recorded by the note taker assigned to each table, and attendees were able to provide additional input by writing comments on sticky notes and placing them on the schematics. Comment forms were available for attendees to submit more detailed feedback if desired. Project team members were available at each table to answer questions and discuss any issues with attendees.

In total, there were 61 attendees. Five written comment forms were received.

Elected and other officials in attendance:

- Alderman James Cappleman (Ward 46)
- Matthew Trewartha, Representative of Alderman James Cappleman (Ward 46)
- Dan Luna, Representative of Alderman Harry Osterman (Ward 48)
- Emily Volini, Representative of Alderman Harry Osterman (Ward 48)

The following Project Study Group (PSG) agencies were represented: IDOT, CDOT.

Feedback and Comments Received

The following analysis includes feedback received from the breakout group discussion, the designated question-and-answer periods, and written comment forms provided at the meeting. This analysis has also been informed by comments submitted through the project's online comment portal.

Alternatives

-While no alternative emerged as the overwhelming favorite of attendees, Alternative A-3 received the most statements of support. Alternative C-3 was also favored by some attendees, though there were some concerns regarding the reduced access at Lawrence Avenue and Montrose Avenue. Neither Alternative B-4 nor Alternative B-3 received much support from attendees, and no attendee vocalized a preference for B-3 above all other alternatives.

Alternative A-3

-A number of attendees expressed concern that traffic would increase at the northbound Montrose Avenue exit ramp due to the consolidation of access at Wilson Avenue. One attendee suggested this exit ramp should be widened to three lanes to avoid queuing issues. There was also some concern that this alternative could increase traffic on Marine Drive and cause traffic dispersion into surrounding neighborhoods.

-Multiple attendees noted that this was their preferred alternative, particularly in comparison to B-3.

-One attendee commented that the proposed southbound Lawrence Avenue ramp appeared to be shorter than the existing ramp, which could cause safety issues.

Alternative B-3

-Numerous attendees were concerned by the removal of northbound access at Montrose Avenue, believing that northbound access at Lawrence Avenue would not be sufficient to handle the traffic. It was also stated that such a configuration could attract an undesirable amount of traffic to the Lawrence area.

Alternative B-4

-This alternative was viewed as superior to B-3 by several attendees, in part because of the more direct exit provided at Wilson Avenue. However, many attendees registered similar concerns regarding a lack of northbound access at Montrose Avenue.

-Only one attendee expressed a preference for B-4 above all other alternatives.

Alternative C-3

-Numerous attendees were concerned that the level of access provided at Lawrence Avenue in this alternative (ramps to and from the north only) would not be adequate for the area, given the amount of traffic that enters and exits NLSD at the location and Lawrence's connection with the Uptown Entertainment District. At least one comment was received stating that a southbound entrance at Lawrence is essential.

-Views regarding full access at Wilson Avenue were split. Those who viewed it positively approved of the access provided to Weiss Hospital; those who viewed it negatively noted it did not seem sensible to direct a large amount of traffic onto a street that is smaller than Montrose Avenue and Lawrence Avenue. One attendee pointed out that the increased access at Wilson Avenue would bring more traffic in front of Weiss Hospital and along Marine Drive, which could interfere with hospital operations.

-One attendee noted that Montrose Avenue and Lawrence Avenue are major east-west thoroughfares well into the city; therefore, it makes more sense to direct traffic to these two roadways instead of Wilson Avenue. In contrast, another attendee commented that Wilson should be able to absorb additional traffic because current traffic volumes on the roadway are so low.

-Views also differed on the park impacts of C-3: some attendees did not approve of the roadway alignment, which curves east into the park, while others noted that there were no park impacts between Wilson Avenue and Montrose Avenue west of NLSD. One attendee noted that Lawrence immediately west of Clarendon is fronted by many small residential buildings with entrances directly to the street which are more negatively impacted by traffic and congestion as compared with Wilson which has fewer residential buildings directly fronting on the street immediately west of Clarendon.

Montrose Avenue

-Numerous attendees were concerned that the elimination of northbound exit ramps at either Wilson Avenue or Lawrence Avenue would cause traffic to back up onto NLSD at Montrose.

-In multiple alternatives, numerous attendees were concerned with the lack of a northbound entrance ramp.

-A suggestion was made to add left turn lanes and arrows at Montrose Avenue and Marine Drive.

Wilson Avenue

-Numerous attendees voiced opposition to allocating the largest amount of traffic onto Wilson Avenue, given the higher traffic volumes present at Montrose Avenue and Lawrence Avenue. Additionally, it would create more traffic on Marine Drive and in front of Weiss Hospital.

-One attendee commented that businesses were concerned with the lack of direct access from the elimination of the Wilson Avenue ramps.

Lawrence Avenue

-Multiple attendees voiced their concern about high traffic volumes west of NLSD and the large amount of pedestrian crossing traffic. Several suggestions included the need for a traffic signal on Clarendon at the Field House as well as at Lawrence Avenue and Marine Drive.

-Several attendees suggested that northbound entrance and southbound exit ramps were necessary at Lawrence, citing the desire to access to the nearby entertainment district and high average daily traffic volume in this area in comparison to Wilson Avenue.

Traffic Volumes

-Multiple attendees were concerned by how the final alternatives will affect traffic patterns and volume in neighborhood streets west of NLSD, specifically Marine Drive and Clarendon Avenue. It was suggested that the area of traffic analysis should be expanded west to take in these areas.

Signalization

-Within at least one group, there was skepticism that added signalization at the junctions (particularly Montrose Avenue) would provide the benefits necessary to support a different roadway configuration. One attendee suggested signals be installed at the current junctions to provide some evidence of their benefits in advance of the larger NLSD project.

Pedestrians and Bicyclists

-Multiple attendees agreed that pedestrian and bicycle trails should not be located near the Drive, and that there should be some sort of “green buffer” between the road and trails.

-Several attendees agreed with the need for improved bicycle and pedestrian access in the area and were interested in how this access could be maintained and made inviting to users. One attendee specifically noted the need for wider pedestrian tunnels.

-A small number of attendees were concerned that changing traffic flows could create unsafe conditions for pedestrians, especially on Clarendon Avenue between Wilson Avenue and Lawrence Avenue.

Park Impacts and Aesthetics

-A handful of attendees voiced concerns regarding the potential loss of trees (both in the park and the median) and plans for the historic bridges (i.e. demolition or restoration). Some attendees stated that trees and vegetation should be retained to preserve the boulevard character of NLSD.

- One attendee suggested lowering the Drive below grade in this area and routing the east-west cross streets over it at grade in order to improve the view to the park and lakefront from west of the Drive.

Future Meetings and Outreach

-Several comments were received on how to present the alternatives more effectively, specifically the need to illustrate how traffic flows and volumes will differ from existing conditions under each alternative.

-It was also suggested that any depictions of alternatives also display the existing ramp configuration.

-Several attendees were curious regarding the parking configuration and impacts associated with each alternative and suggested this information be provided at the next meeting.

-The discussion and the question-and-answer periods generated several possible evaluation criteria for future analysis, including: impacts on trees and historic structures (especially bridges); construction costs, timelines and impacts; weekend traffic analysis, including typical and special event traffic; traffic analysis west of NLSD including impacts on the Uptown Entertainment District; and transit operations.