

UNION GAP CITY COUNCIL ADJOURNED STUDY SESSION MEETING
Council Chambers, City Hall
Union Gap, Washington
September 17, 2007

Call to Order Mayor Reeves called the Study Session Meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Council Members Present Council Members Jim Lemon, David Butler, Dan Olson (6:17 p.m.), Toni Webb, Glenn Bateman, Dan Vanover, and Roger Wentz were present.

Staff Present Robert Noe, City Attorney; Dennis Henne, Public Works Director; William Rathbone, Development Coordinator; Tim Whitehurst, Fire Lieutenant; Karen Clifton, City Treasurer; and Kathryn Thompson, City Clerk were present.

Others Officials Present Representative Mary Skinner; County Commissioners Rand Elliott and Ron Gamache were present.

Other Staff Present Jerry Long, Assistant to Representative Skinner; Robert McCanny, Transportation Assistant to Representative Skinner; Troy Suing, DOT Project Engineer; Jeff Minnick, DOT Project Engineer; Don Whitehouse, DOT Regional Manager; and Gary Ekstedt, Yakima County Engineer.

Audience Present Tony Reise, John Hodkinson, and others were present.

Valley Mall Blvd./I-82 Interchange Reconstruction Mayor Reeves opened the meeting and everyone was introduced.

Don Whitehouse, Department of Transportation (DOT) Regional Manager, informed tonight's discussion will be geared toward how the Valley Mall Boulevard/I-82 project has evolved. He informed when this project received funding, there were no designs and the price estimates were refined as the project developed.

Troy Suing, DOT Project Engineer, distributed handouts and explained that in November 2005 the price estimate for the project with the flyover option was approximately \$30 million, and when looked at again in August of 2006 \$30 million still looked okay. After that, fuel prices spiked and all State projects were re-evaluated and the price went up \$2.3 million for inflation, making the current budget a little over \$32 million. In December 2006 a Value Engineering (VE) Study took place and that is where the roundabout concept came from.

Representative Skinner questioned if the experts brought in for the VE Study were from this area or out of town and did they think the traffic flow here would work with roundabouts, especially with the number of large trucks using this area.

Mr. Suing stated the VE study group was a mixture of local people and people from the State headquarters. He informed the study was done over five days and took into consideration the businesses in the area, mobility, etc. He also informed Union Gap's Public Works Director and representatives from the Valley Mall and Gearjammer Truck Plaza were brought in for the discussions.

Mr. Whitehouse stated one person on the VE team was the design engineer for roundabouts on both sides of the state. He also explained that the VE group makes recommendations and then the DOT staff review the alternatives and make a decision as to whether to accept the recommendations or not. He stated the roundabouts provided a better level of service for the next 25 years. He stated DOT staff went to the VE group with the flyover option, but the VE group came back with the roundabout option.

Representative Skinner commented that the uses here are different than in many communities and stated that the Valley Mall would add more stores if they had the buildings.

Mr. Whitehouse stated the roundabout alternative will move more vehicles than signal lights and double left hand turn lanes require wider roadway. He informed this proposal is a modified roundabout because of the loop ramp. The loop ramp is designed to allow people to get into the Valley Mall and back onto the freeway to leave. He stated the intersection of Rudkin Road and Valley Mall Boulevard is within the City limits, but the State is including it in the project in order to make the design work.

Mr. Suing informed the project team reanalyzed this proposal and had a third party consultant review the roundabout design last February and March, and then performed a cost risk assessment.

Mr. Whitehouse informed all mega projects in the State go through the cost risk assessment process.

Mayor Reeves questioned who made the decision there were wetlands to mitigate that would require a longer bridge on the original design option.

Jeff Minnick, Project Engineer, informed several agencies such as Yakama Nation, Fish & Wildlife, Department of Ecology, etc. were involved in reviewing the area and determining the environmental affects of the project. He then reviewed base cost estimates for the flyover option showing the project total estimate as over \$38 million before the cost risk analysis and over \$42 million after the cost risk analysis.

Mr. Whitehouse informed the same process was followed with the roundabout option and the cost dropped from over \$22 million before the cost risk analysis to over \$21 million after the cost risk analysis.

Council Member Vanover commented he has talked with truck drivers that use the 4-lane roundabouts in the Olympia area and they have no problem negotiating the roundabouts with double trailers.

Representative Skinner questioned why left turn lanes are not as efficient as roundabouts.

Mr. Whitehouse informed with turn lanes the cars build up and everyone tries to get through the next light cycle, but with roundabouts there is not a build up of cars because random vehicles approach and keep moving.

Council Member Webb commented she has been through the roundabouts in the Tri-Cities and North Bend and they both seemed to work well.

Mr. Whitehouse informed he is fairly confident they can build the roundabout for the budget they have. He also informed they are still looking at design, and are considering making the aprons lower and with a different texture. He stated trucks will use both lanes and signs will be installed instructing people to yield to all vehicles in the circle. He stated they would also like landscaping in the center so people cannot see through the roundabout, because this tends to slow the vehicles down.

Council Member Butler questioned why roundabouts were not used at the Nob Hill Boulevard/Highway 24/I-82 interchange.

Mr. Whitehouse stated he is not certain, but it may have been because Nob Hill is elevated above the ground. He stated roundabouts are being considered for North 16th Avenue and I-82. He also informed he looked into why California was removing roundabouts and found that they were not really roundabouts, they were residential calming devices and had been installed instead of speed bumps.

Council Member Lemon questioned if a greater number of cars will be moved through the area, even though they are travelling at a slower speed.

Mr. Whitehouse stated yes, the roundabouts will provide a higher level of service on all the legs and delays will be minimal.

Council Member Olson left the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

Jerry Long, Assistant to Representative Skinner, questioned how the size of the roundabout is determined.

Mr. Whitehouse stated the experts determine the size based on the turning radius needed for trucks. He informed the smallest roundabout would take a 100-foot load.

Council Member Vanover questioned if the section of Rudkin Road by the State Patrol offices will be reopened to trucks.

The Public Works Director informed the City closed that to truck traffic, so it would be up to the City to decide if that could be reopened.

Mr. Whitehouse also informed they are talking with the businesses in the area and will have to negotiate some right-of-way after the environmental process is completed.

Council Member Vanover questioned if the loop concept helps avoid the wetland mitigation.

Mr. Whitehouse stated it eliminates most of the wetland mitigation, but they will still have to mitigate Spring Creek. He informed the State has already purchased 107 acres across the freeway and some of that will be used for mitigation.

Council Member Vanover commented he likes the design concept.

Council Member Wentz stated he would like to see this done tomorrow.

Mr. Minnick informed they are shooting for going to bid in October 2009 with construction in the Spring, but they have to negotiate the purchase of right-of-way first.

Council Member Bateman questioned what the State does about frost in the winter on concrete bridges.

Mr. Whitehouse informed they pretreat the roadways and bridges with anti-icing agents.

Adjournment

Council Member Vanover commented the chemical deicer used has simplified the truckers' lives.

After discussion, Mayor Reeves thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the Study Session meeting at 7:21 p.m.

These minutes dated September 17, 2007 were approved at the Regular Council Meeting of October 8, 2007.

Aubrey C. Reeves, Jr., Mayor

ATTEST:

Kathryn Thompson, CMC, City Clerk