

To: FILE
Department of Public Works
Mt. Vernon at Vermack Intersection Improvement Project

From: Michael Smith, P.E., Public Works Director

Date: July 8, 2013

Subject: Public Information Open House and Comments Received

Meeting summary

The Department of Public Works conducted a public information open house (PIOH) on June 17, 2013, at St. Luke Presbyterian Church. The church is located at 1978 Mount Vernon Road and is directly adjacent to the proposed project area. The PIOH was advertised via the *Dunwoody Crier* newspaper, direct mailings to affected property owners, and signage posted at and in the vicinity of the project area.

The PIOH stations included: a sign-in/orientation station, an overview station including a looped presentation projected onto a large screen; two alternatives stations showing three alternatives still under consideration, as well as a roundabout alternative no longer under consideration and iPads showing traffic animations; a potential aesthetic treatments station; and a comment sheet station upon exit.

Sign-in sheets recorded that at least 82 persons attended the meeting, and 36 comment sheets were returned. An additional comment was provided to a City councilperson via email following the meeting.

Comments summary

The comment sheet asked five Yes-No questions regarding traffic at the intersection and potential improvements; each Yes-No question included a follow-up question for more specific responses.

The majority of commenters agree that the City should improve this intersection, primarily by adding turn lanes. They experience significant traffic delays in the project area, have difficulty completing turning movements from all directions, and generally agree that the proposed improvements should include accommodations for pedestrians, cyclists, and aesthetic treatments.

Additional feedback included: significant concern for pedestrian safety, particularly school children who use this intersection; opposition to a roundabout at this intersection; concern regarding right-of-way acquisition and impacts to tree buffers; some skepticism of the need for bike lanes; some opposition to aesthetic treatments; some concern regarding commuter traffic; some concern regarding the three-lane typical section and length of the project; some general opposition to the project; a comment regarding accommodating MARTA buses; and a comment regarding the utility of the PIOH meeting format.

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Responses to the comment sheet's Yes-No questions are tallied below:

Question 1: Do you experience vehicular traffic delays in the project area?

YES 33 NO 3

Question 2: Do you have difficulty completing turning movements at this intersection?

YES 26 NO 8

Question 3: Should the City improve this intersection to reduce congestion?

YES 31 NO 5

Question 4: Should pedestrians and/or bicyclists be accommodated at this intersection?

YES 28 NO 6

Question 5: Should aesthetic improvements be made at this intersection?

YES 23 NO 7

Significant comments, concerns, and questions raised in the follow-up questions or included as additional comments are summarized in the table below. The table includes the number of persons making the comment and proposed City responses. Duplicate or similar comments made by the same commenter were counted once.

Comment/Concern	No. of Commenters	Proposed City response
Need for turn lanes at this intersection.	7	Each alternative the City is proposing includes new left turn lanes to improve the intersection's functionality. The City agrees that installing left-turn lanes at the intersection and removing left-turning vehicles from traffic will improve flows.
Need for left-turn lanes in each direction at this intersection.	2	The City proposes installing a left-turn lane in each direction on Mt. Vernon Road and on Vermack Road. The traffic analysis did not indicate sufficient operational benefit to justify additional costs for inclusion of a left-turn lane on Manhasset Drive.

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Comment/Concern	No. of Commenters	Proposed City response
Opposed to a roundabout at this intersection.	4	City planners considered the installation of a roundabout at this location; however, traffic studies determined a roundabout would not improve this intersection's level of service or improve traffic flow. The roundabout has been removed from further consideration.
Support for Alternate 1B.	3	The City will take support for specific alternates into account.
Support for Alternate 2.	7	The City will take support for specific alternates into account.
Opposition to Alternate 2 due to minimal week-day church traffic.	1	Widening Mt. Vernon Road to a safer, more efficient three-lane section is identified in the City's Long Range Transportation Plan. This project will be able to accommodate this planned, three-lane section in the future.
Also consider adjusting signal timing at this intersection.	1	The City will review signal timing at this intersection and adjust to improve traffic flows to the extent possible.
Concern regarding impacts to property owners, including right-of-way acquisition and tree buffers.	4	The City will employ measures to minimize impacts to property owners to the extent possible, including using retaining walls. Where screening vegetation would be removed, the City will work with the affected property owner to replace this vegetation.
Improve pedestrian safety at intersection, particularly for children and students; currently dangerous for them. Include improved sidewalks, crosswalks, and signage.	16	The City will make significant pedestrian improvements to this intersection to include improved sidewalks, marked crosswalks and pedestrian signals in each direction, and pedestrian islands.

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Comment/Concern	No. of Commenters	Proposed City response
Make improvements for pedestrians only; no bike lanes.	4	Current City policy includes accommodating both pedestrians and bicyclists in transportation projects to the extent possible. Dedicated bike lanes at the intersection would separate traffic and improve functionality.
Install bike lanes.	2	Current City policy includes accommodating bicyclists in transportation projects to the extent possible. Bike lanes are currently included in the intersection design.
Concern regarding safety for pedestrians due to right-turning vehicles; no right-turn “channelized” lanes.	2	The concepts presented include pedestrian islands on at least two of the intersection’s corners, and Alternates 1B and 2 will include islands on three corners. This will reduce the length between pedestrian refuges, providing additional safety from right-turning vehicles.
Concern regarding traffic signal and push-for-walk button on pedestrian island. Is there a way to move button away from traffic, prior to entering intersection?	1	The City will install the push-for-walk button prior to any signalized lane crossings. If an unsignalized right turn lane with a pedestrian island is designed, the push-for-walk button will need to be installed within the island.
Accommodate MARTA bus stop.	1	The City will communicate and coordinate with MARTA to determine the needs of the existing stop so that an effective and context sensitive bus stop may be accommodated.

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Comment/Concern	No. of Commenters	Proposed City response
Keep aesthetic improvements minimal; other issues more important.	4	The City proposes minimal aesthetic improvements, including mast-arm poles, stone-faced retaining walls (if applicable), and limited use of brick-stamping on pedestrian islands. In cooperation with affected property owners, the City will replace vegetative buffers.
Include mast-arm poles.	3	The City currently proposes to use mast-arm poles at this intersection.
Do not include three-lane section with two-way left-turn lane; only widen Mt. Vernon Road to accommodate turn lanes at intersection.	2	Widening Mt. Vernon Road to a safer, more efficient three-lane section is identified in the City's Long Range Transportation Plan. This project will be able to accommodate this planned, three-lane section in the future.
Other projects are more important, including paving.	3	The City has identified this intersection as deficient and a high priority in its Comprehensive Transportation Plan.
Duplicate Mt. Vernon Road/Tilly Mill Road intersection turn lanes.	1	Traffic analysis indicates the need for left-turn lanes at this intersection; the Mt. Vernon Road/Tilly Mill Road intersection does not include left-turn lanes.
Concern regarding high volume of pass-through commuter traffic.	2	The City has considered traffic volumes as part of this study. Consideration of traffic origins/destinations is out of the scope of the current study. However, the City will take this concern into account.

Comment/Concern	No. of Commenters	Proposed City response
The informal PIOH meeting format did not adequately disseminate information. Consider alternative formats in the future.	1	The PIOH format is generally intended to accommodate informal communications between attendees and City representatives and staff; to accommodate citizens' varying schedules; and to allow equitable time for all attendees to receive information and provide comments and concerns to the City. The City appreciates this concern regarding the PIOH format and will take it into account for future project meetings.

Comment record

All written comments received as part of the follow-up questions, as additional comments, and following the meeting are recorded in the tables below:

Question 1: Do you experience vehicular traffic delays in the project area?
Follow-up question: If so, at what time(s) and from what direction(s)?
From Manhasset, early in the morning waiting for the light to change.
Early morning turning left westbound.
Mount Vernon.
School time.
Almost all the time.
Peak hours AM & PM.
Northbound on Vermack at 5 PM.
7:30 AM to 1.
Traffic lights/Vermack to Manhasset are horrid.
North on Vermack school mornings. West on Mt. Vernon 8 to 9 on weekdays.
All directions. I live on the St. Lukes side of the intersection and travel thru multiple times during the day from every direction.

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Question 1: Do you experience vehicular traffic delays in the project area?
Follow-up question: If so, at what time(s) and from what direction(s)?
Usually on Mt. Vernon going west in AM/noon/PM, 5ish.
EB/WB.
Turning left onto Mt. Vernon from Vermack (8 to 9 AM). Back-up of traffic on Mt. Vernon during rush hours.
AM from Gwinnett, PM towards Gwinnett.
AM 8 to 9. PM 4 to 5:30.
8 AM. 9 AM. 3 PM. 5 to 6 PM. Left onto Vermack from Mt. Vernon.
All ways, all times of day.
Mornings.
For 15 to 20 minutes. Can live with it.
Not really significant. A light or two during rush hour.
8 AM to 6 PM.
We live in Gramercy Court so get all the delays. 7 days a week.
Mt. Vernon morning leading toward Perimeter.
Left turns.
West on Mt. Vernon-either trying to turn left on Vermack or getting stuck there various times.
Mt. Vernon westbound every day (several times).
With new timing of light there are delays from Manhasset Drive 24 + 7
Morning, afternoon, evening.
Every direction, morning, evening, and rush hour.

Question 2: Do you have difficulty completing turning movements at this intersection?
Follow-up question: If so, at what time(s) and from what direction(s)?
Westbound in the AM.
Left from Manhasset onto Mt. Vernon – light timing too short.
Turn left onto Vermack off Mt. Vernon <u>any</u> time of day.

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Question 2: Do you have difficulty completing turning movements at this intersection?
Follow-up question: If so, at what time(s) and from what direction(s)?
Manhasset Drive.
Even at 5 AM long unnecessary waits.
Occasionally.
East on Mt. Vernon at Manhasset 5 to 6:30 PM weekdays.
Yes. Left onto Manhasset Dr from Mt. Vernon. All day but especially on weekends and at rush hour.
Going west on Mt. Vernon turning left on Vermack.
Have to wait to turn left onto Vermack sometimes through 2 light cycles.
Right or left turn.
All left turns.
No problems. Patience are (sic) a virtue.
No. Just slow down a bit and be careful.
Morning and evening rush hours, plus other times.
Left turns-Mt. Vernon to Manhasset Dr.
Always at prime time, even mid-AM and mid-PM
Rush hours turning left from Vermack.
Left turn in AM from Vermack to Mt. Vernon.
If everyone used turn signals, it would be easier for left turns.

Question 3: Should the City improve this intersection to reduce congestion?
Follow-up question: What specific improvements do you recommend?
Turn lanes will help this matter.
Turning lanes. (Alternative) 1B.
Look at signal timing in addition to turn movements.
Left turn lanes.
Basics are covered in plan design. <u>No roundabout.</u>

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Question 3: Should the City improve this intersection to reduce congestion?
Follow-up question: What specific improvements do you recommend?
I can live with any of the proposals except the <u>roundabout</u> but I am concerned about the impact on the property owners involved. I hope you will be as fair as possible with them when you design the final solution.
Option/Alternative #2.
I like Alternative #2, the long turn lane.
Turn lanes and sidewalks.
Increase flow.
Sidewalks/crosswalks. Adding turn lanes on Mt. Vernon in both directions and Vermack turning left onto Mt. Vernon.
Left turns lanes on Vermack and Mt. Vernon.
Toll booth at Gwinnett line.
The added turn lanes and extended two-way turn lane on Mt. Vernon look good.
Alternative 2.

Question 4: Should pedestrians and/or bicyclists be accommodated at this intersection?
Follow-up question: What specific improvements do you recommend?
Bike lanes. Children are always trying to cross before/after school. Cross walks with signs.
Definitely pedestrians because of the school.
Pedestrians only.
Yes. Pedestrians should be able to use the sidewalk. I do not want bike lanes.
Better signing & crosswalks. Corner is school bus stop location.
Pedestrian safety is woefully overlooked in Dunwoody.
They are already.
Make crossing safe but not at the extreme expense of traffic. The brick crossing make sense. Police the speed limit.

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Question 4: Should pedestrians and/or bicyclists be accommodated at this intersection?
Follow-up question: What specific improvements do you recommend?
One of the issues I have with the bicyclists is that they ride right thru the traffic light now-it will be even more dangerous for them when there are more lanes and turn lights-but I don't see how we can protect them from their own stupidity. Also, none of the proposals seems to offer a safe way for groups of children who walk to school to safely cross Mt. Vernon from the Manhasset Drive neighborhoods.
No channelized rights.
Only concerned about pedestrians.
Pedestrians.
Modestly.
Bike lanes and sidewalks.
Peds are accommodated.
Pedestrians yes, bicyclists no. I think too much attention, time, and money is being spent on bicyclists.
Proper sidewalks, pedestrian lights.
Very dangerous crossing Mt. Vernon to sidewalk-people turning right from Vermack don't see crosswalk.
Walking a group of young children to school-do not feel comfortable bringing them onto a concrete island with traffic all around us. Is there a way to work the pedestrian signal box from beyond all the traffic and concrete islands? I currently have the children wait on the sidewalk behind the utility pole until we get the walk signal.

Question 5: Should aesthetic improvements be made at this intersection?
Follow-up question: What specific improvements do you recommend?
Accommodate MARTA bus stop – I see students leave trash and stand on roadway after school (approx.. 3:30).
Do not overdue (sic).
Spend the \$ on good engineering and basic buffers for the lost right-of-way frontage.
Yes. Do not put in channelized islands. Dangerous to pedestrians.
Buried utilities; mast posts; lighting; stamped brick walkways.

Question 5: Should aesthetic improvements be made at this intersection?
Follow-up question: What specific improvements do you recommend?
Minimal.
Visibility should be a priority.
No roundabout.
Depends.
Doesn't matter.
Attractive flourbed (sic) and trees and signage.
Mast-arm poles.
Improve crosswalks-how about a sign? "Be nice, Let people turn left"
Safety and congestion relief first.
Better signs and lines.

Additional comments
Do this project. I don't care which one but I like #2.
Please do not take away the tree barriers guarding the homes from Mt. Vernon.
We do not want the road widened to 3 lanes to include a turning lane!
You are making the same problem at this intersection as exists at Chamblee-Dunwoody Road and Womack. The left turn lanes should be at <u>all</u> four roads (include Manhasset)!
No roundabouts!
Roundabout is the only solution for left-hand turns.
Channelize right is dangerous to pedestrians. I have not seen an option without these.
Only widen Mt. Vernon far enough to accommodate turn lanes, no farther than necessary.
There are more locations through the city in need of attention. Roads are more important and sidewalks are better served in the subdivisions than where they are being placed.

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Additional comments
<p>I vote for Alternative 1 because that has the least impact on homeowners who live on the road. I respect their rights foremost.</p>
<p>I do not support Alternative 2 because the traffic entering and leaving the church parking lot is only on Sunday morning. There is little church traffic through the week.</p>
<p>Important -- also, extending the turn lane will encourage even more Gwinnett commuter traffic in Vernon Oaks. I have stood at my mailbox between 8a to 9a and 5p to 6p and 85% of the cars are commuters. This issue must be addressed.</p>
<p>Also, I am extremely disappointed with the progress of paving since we became a city. Too much money is being spent on “focus” groups and paid consultants that could be spent on paving.</p>
<p>Waste of money! Pave the roads instead!!</p>
<p>Duplicate the Tilly Mill/Mt. Vernon turn lanes. That’s really all we need.</p>
<p>Option 2 with longer... [illegible] turn lanes would... [illegible] for the long term... [illegible] shorten turn lanes.</p>
<p>Really like Alt #2.</p>
<p>1B & 2 both look good. 2 might be a smart plan for the future-1 car can tie up traffic now and it will only become a greater problem.</p>
<p>Please no roundabout!!! If utility poles are not moved—is the (sic) a safety issue during what would be a minor incident...</p>
<p>Option #2.</p>
<p>I think I understand that the format used for the “presentation” on Monday night keeps some voices in the community from shouting down any progress...but, the loose and informal format doesn’t disseminate the information in a uniform way. If we could state that comments cannot be longer than, say, 1 minute, and then get the best engineer to answer each question, we would get uniform information out and be able to explain things better. I asked two different engineers how long the queue would be for the turn lane and received two different answers. Also, I am not as tall or large as some people who were having a face-to-face conversation and so I couldn’t hear or see or ask questions. I also think the engineers might answer the same question over and over using the informal format....could we try a sit-down presentation? Perhaps?</p>
<p>Not a biggie, just feedback. I am certain we need the turn lane and am only concerned that we make it long enough to hold enough cars to make a difference after the time and money spent.</p>