

DEIS Comments and Responses

This section contains comments received during the comment period for the Draft EIS, which was issued on December 21, 2007. The comment period ended on January 23, 2008. Written responses to these comments are provided. Text changes were made, where applicable, in the Final EIS document to reflect concerns and issues raised during the comment period.

Comments

1. Deborah Nordin
2. Unsigned Comment
3. Bob Nyberg
4. David Milot and Graham Young
5. Gary Petersen
6. Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
7. Lake Stevens Fire
8. Community Transit

Deborah Nordin, 9708 S. Lake Stevens Road, Everett, WA 98205
(Received January 9, 2008 at public meeting)

I think you should detour large trucks from going up the hill off the Trestle to Cavalero Road on 20th because of the difficulty of trucks starting and stopping on that hill with the new signal light.

County Response to Comment 1

20th Street SE does not experience a large amount of truck traffic as most trucks already tend to use SR 204, US 2 and SR 9 to reach their destinations in this area. However, based on traffic data and modeling, the expansion of 20th Street SE is being carefully designed to incorporate new features that minimize difficulties associated with other vehicles traveling in an eastbound direction up Cavalero Hill. An additional eastbound travel lane and a left turn lane onto the new northbound leg of Cavalero Road will minimize a slowing of the travel speed normally associated with turn movements. Contributing to the increase in vehicle movement will be a sight distance improvement near the top of Cavalero Hill that will modify a section of 20th Street SE, and the traffic signals on 20th Street SE, including the new signal at Cavalero Road, will be synchronized to improve traffic flow. In addition, the PM peak travel time tends to be less congested than the AM peak travel time as the afternoon rush hour tends to be spread over a longer period of time. The County is also developing a Traffic Demand Management (TDM) Plan to reduce drive-alone trips by providing incentives that will increase people using carpools, vanpools, and transit.

The decision to install a stoplight at the intersection of Cavalero Road and 20th Street SE is necessary to resolve several traffic and safety problems in the area. Vehicles traveling northbound on Cavalero Road that need to make a left turn lane onto westbound 20th Street SE currently do not have adequate sight distance regarding traffic approaching from the west. The signal will enable these vehicles to safely make a left-hand turn. (A roundabout alternative was considered at this location but rejected due to the concern that traffic may back up on the hill.) In addition, the developer of the new East Everett development on the northwest corner of the intersection proposed a new north leg of Cavalero Road be constructed to provide safer access to 20th Street SE than could be provided by 74th Avenue SE, further to the west down Cavalero Hill. This required a signal to allow traffic from the development to safely access the roadway and to merge with existing traffic.

The graphic on page xiv shows the features in the proposed 4-lane section, which includes an additional eastbound travel lane on Cavalero Hill, which will improve traffic flow. The graphic on page xv shows a center lane that will be either a planted median or a two-way left-turn lane between signalized intersections, and a left-turn lane at the intersection. This left-turn lane at Cavalero Road to direct traffic onto the new northbound leg of the road will remove stopped traffic from the eastbound travel lanes, which will also assist in keeping traffic moving.

Thank you for your comments.

Unsigned Comment

(Received January 9, 2008 at public meeting)

I need to turn left off of 87th onto 20th in the morning. Will it be harder to get out turning across 2 or 3 lanes of traffic, especially if traffic is backed up that far (which it sometimes is)?

Also, as currently things stand, when traffic is backed up past 79th in the morning, things are really compounded as cars turn right on red from 79th onto 20th, while drivers already on 20th are waiting on a green light so they don't block the intersection.

County Response to Comment 2

The County is designing the project so that residents can facilitate left turns onto 20th Street in a timely and safe manner. The new roadway will be a 5-lane road with two westbound travel lanes, two eastbound travel lanes, and a center lane. The County is considering two different design options for the center lane to improve safety for drivers. One option would be a two-way center turn lane. When traffic is backed up, the driver wishing to merge into traffic can use the center lane as a safe “rest” position until the backed up traffic can allow the driver into the travel lane. The other option is for the center lane to be a landscaped median. This would mean that a resident wanting to drive west, for example, would first turn right and drive eastwards for a short distance to the next signalized intersection, which from 87th Avenue SE is slightly less than a quarter mile. The driver will then be able to use a U-turn lane at the intersection to head west. For each of these options, the additional travel lane in both eastbound and westbound directions will improve travel flow and reduce traffic congestion.

Regarding traffic backed up past 79th Avenue SE, the County anticipates that traffic congestion and merging problems will be improved with the implementation of a combination of additional travel lanes, synchronized traffic signals to improve traffic flow, and the introduction of measures to reduce drive-alone trips and encourage high-occupancy vehicle travel via carpools, vanpools, and transit.

Thank you for your comments.

Bob Nyberg, 2809 164th Place SE, Bothell, WA 98012
(Received January 9, 2008 at public meeting)

I live outside the immediate 20th Street area, but I'm interested in the project as I cycle westbound down 20th Street SE to meet the Pipeline Trail to Everett. I'm concerned about the multi-use part on the downhill slope – it's steep. There most likely won't be a lot of foot traffic there but it could be tricky with bikes going down at 20 to 30 mph. A cycle overpass to the trail below would be awesome.

Also, as it is now, the stop sign at the bottom of the hill is obscured by a road sign. Bikes heading westbound on the right shoulder of 20th must merge to center lane with cars doing 45 mph, so it's very dangerous to reach the Pipeline Trail. Please get the project done faster.

County Response to Comment 3

The County is planning to improve the sight distance at the top of Cavalero Hill by modifying the roadway, and this would improve visibility for bikers regarding the hill itself and adjacent driveway access of residents. During the design phase of the project, we will be considering a possible connection to the multi-use pathway on the south side of the roadway from 71st Avenue SE, which would access it approximately halfway down the hill. This would eliminate the need for bicyclists to traverse the entire incline of the hill. Striping of the multi-use path is also being considered to provide a separation between pedestrians and bicyclists. In addition, the multi-use path will have a curb to provide some separation and safety from passing vehicular traffic. There are no plans at the present time to provide a cycle overpass to the trail below.

Regarding the difficult of trying to connect to the Pipeline Trail, the new 12-foot wide multi-use path on the south side of 20th Street SE will preclude the current process of having to merge across lanes of traffic from the north shoulder of the roadway. When the roadway is expanded, bicyclists will cross from the north side of 20th Street SE to the south side at the new signal at Cavalero Road. The section of the trail at the stop sign at the base of Cavalero Hill is not within the County's jurisdiction but that of WSDOT. As the design of the roadway is developed in more detail, the County will enter into discussions with WSDOT on how the connection of the two Trail sections can be designed to provide good sight distance for bicyclists and a safe transition.

Thank you for your comments.

David Milot and Graham Young
(Received at the January 9, 2008 public meeting)

We own three houses on 20th Street: 7330, 7324 and 7314. All three houses have septic systems that will encroach in the new right-of-way. We plan to apply for annexation into the sewer district, as we feel it will be impossible to retain our septics, and now is the time to get sewer on the south side of 20th Street SE.

We also have concerns with sight distance and grade issues. And we feel a bus shelter at 20th Street and Cavalero Road in the park would be a good improvement.

County response

In order for your properties to be hooked up to a sewer system, it would be necessary for them to be located within the boundary of the Lake Stevens Sewer District (LSSD). Property owners must go through a formal petition process with the LSSD, and 60% of the property owners in the area that is proposed for annexation must sign the petition. The process can be lengthy, and we would advise you to start looking into the requirements in the near future. As the project design progresses, the County will be coordinating with the LSSD regarding options for property owners whose septic systems will be impacted by the expansion of 20th Street SE.

We understand your concerns regarding the location of your properties on Cavalero Hill as their position relates to sight distance and grade issues. The proposed design for the roadway includes a modification of 20th Street SE west of the Cavalero Road intersection that will improve the sight distance for drivers and those property owners . With respect to placing a bus shelter at 20th Street and Cavalero Road, it is proposed to install bus pullouts on the far sides of the intersection in both the eastbound and westbound direction. The County will coordinate with Community Transit regarding the installation of bus shelters. Community Transit is receiving an increasing number of requests for bus shelters as the population along the corridor increases.

Thank you for your comments.

COMMENT 5

Gary Petersen
2325 79th SE
Everett, WA. 98205
January 22, 2008

Ms. Julie Highton
Senior Environmental Planner
Snohomish County Public Works
3000 Rockefeller Ave.
M/S607
Everett, WA. 98201

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Dear Ms. Highton,

This letter is in regards to my strong disagreement with the Snohomish Counties currently proposed Road Improvement Project for 20th St. SE / US2 Trestle to 91st Ave. SE. Everett.

I believe the yellow colored notice I received in the mail which included diagrams that clearly depicts a 5 lane road are very deceptive in that they do not demonstrate to the visual reader that "landscaped medians between signalized intersections" will be included in this plan. As a concerned citizen, I must ask; why these diagrams do not clearly depict the actual finished project?

As a land owner with property on both the north and south sides of this corridor, I must communicate my strongest opposition to this proposed design. This corridor is within the Lake Stevens Urban Growth area and it is my understanding from speaking directly with the consulting firm of AHBL, who is hired by the city of Lake Stevens to formulate a development plan for the area in question, that at this point, the future land use consultants AHBL say they had not been made aware of Snohomish County's road improvement project, especially as it may effect the future needs of the city of Lake Stevens once the annexation of the area is included in the city. Further, I have no information as to who will be responsible for the maintenance of this planting area, and that concerns me. I can now see from my home, a new planting area, (as required by the county to be installed by developers) and yet this planting area has soon been taken over by blackberries and no one seems to be responsible for their maintenance and care. This lack of follow up by the county generates an unsightly mess for all to see.

By selecting the divided roadway format over the construction of a traditional center "left turn lane", (as is depicted in your public notice) this will penalize all property owners west of 91st and on the other hand not negatively impact owners of property east of 91st with the construction of this restrictive road design. Under your current proposal, emergency vehicles will be forced to have a delayed response time to access all affected properties. This design will also provide unnecessary impediments to the convenient access of current residents to their own property. This design will certainly unnecessarily devalue a property, due to this limited access to east west travel. I believe this design promotes an unnecessary "taking of tax payer's value" when you install such impediments to tax payer's property. I urgently request a reconsideration of this flawed design, and please implement a traditional left turn lane to provide for the timely access of first responders to the folks that live here.

Regards,

Gary Petersen



County Response to Comment 5 (Gary Petersen)

The County uses several avenues to keep the public informed about upcoming projects, including newsletters and meetings. The yellow newsletter that was sent out prior to the January 9 public meeting was not intended to be a comprehensive description of the project, although it clearly stated that the County was considering a landscaped median for the center lane. The newsletter was an invitation to members of the public to attend the meeting and receive more detailed project information. The meeting provided the public and public agencies with an opportunity to discuss one-on-one with County staff the project design issues and options that are currently being considered, and to obtain feedback on people's concerns so that the project design can incorporate solutions to these concerns. The request for written comments is another way for people to advise the County of any concerns they have regarding the preliminary project designs, and we appreciate you taking the time to submit your comments.

The County is designing the project so that residents can access 20th Street in a timely and safe manner. This requires the evaluation of different design options, especially during the early design process. The County has taken the comments it received on the Draft EIS under review and is currently considering two different design options for the center lane. One option is the landscaped median, and the other option is a two-way left-turn lane. We did receive comments, dated January 10 from Lake Stevens Fire, which were primarily concerned with having an open lane during construction. However, following receipt of your comments suggesting emergency responders may encounter difficulties with the median; we did contact them and ask if they wished to provide further comments on this specific aspect of the design, as stated in the Draft EIS. Their second set of comments are dated February 13, 2008.

The responsibility for maintaining planted roadway areas belongs to the County's Road Maintenance division, and the work is handled by a landscaping sub-contractor. Road Maintenance has been notified of your concern.

The project is within the Lake Stevens Urban Growth Area, and the City of Lake Stevens is fully aware of the project, and did attend the public meeting. The County is not privy to matters between the City and their consultants like AHBL, and we would suggest you contact the City if you have any concerns in this regard.

Thank you again for your comments.



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY & HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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January 18, 2008

Ms. Julie Highton
 Senior Environmental Planner
 Snohomish County Public Works
 3000 Rockefeller Ave, M/S 607
 Everett, WA 98201-4046

In future correspondence please refer to:

Log: 120806-08-SN
 Property: 20th Street SE Roadway Expansion, US 2 Trestle to 91st Ave. SE
 Re: Executive Order 05-05 – Receipt of DEIS

Dear Ms. Highton:

Thank you for contacting the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and providing a copy of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The document has been reviewed on behalf of the State Historic Preservation Officer under provisions of Executive Order 05-05. My review is based upon documentation contained in your communication.

I noticed at least two instances in the DEIS where mention is made that no cultural resources were identified within the project area and that no structures eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) were identified within the project area (pp. xxvi–xxvii, 84–85). These statements are not correct and do not accurately reflect the outcome of the Executive Order 05-05 review. In my letter dated October 24, 2007, we concurred with your consultants' determination that a structure identified within the area of potential effect for the project, a Craftsman-style house located at 7708 20th Street SE, **was eligible** for listing in the NRHP. Based on information provided by you, we agreed with your determination that the proposed project would have no effect on this property. The DEIS is incorrect in stating that no NRHP-eligible structures were identified during the survey.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment.

Sincerely,

Matthew Sterner, M.A., RPA
 Transportation Archaeologist
 (360) 586-3082
 matthew.sterner@dahp.wa.gov



County Response to Comment 6 (Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation)

References to the property that was considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places can be found on page 81 under “Affected Environment”. This section of the text summarizes the discussions that took place with the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation regarding the building’s eligibility, and the project’s “no effect” on the building. It also explains that between the time the historic structures survey was completed in September and the time the Draft EIS was issued in December, the property owner demolished the building because the integrity of the interior had been diminished through repeated acts of vandalism. Therefore, while this cultural resource was identified, it no longer exists. This will be clearly stated on the pages you reference in your letter.

Thank you for your comments.

January 10, 2008

Julie Highton
Snohomish county Public Works

Re: 20th St SE Road Improvements

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Upon review of "Draft Environmental Impact Statement", December 2007 the following comments are stated for public record.

1. Reference had been made throughout the document indicating impacts to Lake Stevens Fire during the project. The biggest impact for Lake Stevens Fire is increase of response times during an emergency. It is imperative that Snohomish County Public Works communicate significant closures to Lake Stevens Fire to help accommodate response crews to determine alternate response routes. These need to be communicated in a timely manner for planning purposes.
2. A single lane for emergency vehicles needs to remain intact as much as possible during construction.
3. Qualified traffic control personnel need to be present to aid in emergency access at all times that construction is present.
4. Please advise Lake Stevens Fire of any adverse situations or delineations from the proposed document in a timely manner, so adjustments can be planned.

Thank you for involving Lake Stevens Fire in this planning process. Any further questions may be directed to Robert Marshall, FPS.

Sincerely,



Robert Marshall, FPS
Lake Stevens Fire Department

COMMENT 7, part 2

February 13, 2008

Julie Highton
Snohomish County Public Works

Re: 20th Street SE Road Improvements

The following are listed concerns following our conversation on February 12, 2008 regarding 20th Street SE road improvements.

Is there an impact to emergency vehicle response times with the installation of landscaped medians?

Lake Stevens Fire Department believes that there is significant impact which results in slower response times with this type of installation for the following reasons:

1. 20th St SW is considered a main thoroughfare from East West and vice versa for Lake Stevens Residences.
2. Traffic numbers alone have a tremendous impact on response times depending on time of day.
3. Residences that are not adjacent to the openings in the medians will not have direct access for emergency response.
4. Dependant on location of residence, there may be considerable delay because emergency responders need to travel longer distances to gain access through openings in the median.
5. Impact to response times is also affected by the need to make u-turns in the median openings.
6. These U-turns may not be able to be accomplished by a single arc turn. There may be the need for 2-5 point turns of forward or backing depending on the apparatus in question. This also requires the need for one personnel to exit the vehicle to be a backer for the apparatus. If these actions occur during heavy traffic, the issue of safety for emergency responders is in question.

Lake Stevens Fire believes that impacts to response times are a relevant issue that needs to be addressed in the planning of landscaped medians.

Please include these items in your final report and record.

If there are any other questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Robert Marshall, FPS
Lake Stevens Fire Department

LAKE STEVENS
FIRE

Phone: 425.334.3034
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www.lsfire.org

"Touching Lives Today ~ Planning for Tomorrow"

Fire Commissioners:
Troy Elmore, Dan Lorentzen, Vern Foster
Fire Chief Gary L. Faucett

9811 Chapel Hill Road
Lake Stevens, WA 98258

County Response to Comment 7 (Lake Stevens Fire)

Construction sequencing will be implemented to minimize impacts related to lane closures and to maintain traffic flow and emergency services. It will be the County's priority to keep one lane of 20th Street SE open at all times, with priority travel given when required to emergency service vehicles. Traffic revisions and detours will be signed according to the approved traffic control plans. The County has an efficient and comprehensive communications process that is implemented during project construction to keep the community and relevant public agencies informed of lane, shoulder and road closures. This process is primarily handled by the County's Public Involvement group in conjunction with the construction manager. A weekly roads update regarding closures and timing (schedule and duration) of work is sent to various agencies and newspapers. The County's Public Involvement section coordinates closely with the construction manager, and updates the project web page on the County website, mails notices on changes to agencies, and mails periodic newsletters to the community. This assists residents and agencies in adjusting their travel routes and schedules in a timely manner. The three Lake Stevens Fire personnel who will receive the update are currently listed as Robert Marshall, Dick Adkins, and Scott Boswell.

Certified traffic control personnel such as flaggers will be present to facilitate traffic flow and direct drivers through the construction zone.

While the Final EIS will be issued in February, 2008, the development of the project design will continue into 2009. The basic footprint of the expanded roadway is unlikely to significantly change, however, design features described in the Draft EIS will continue to undergo extensive review for feasibility and function. This includes the original proposal of a landscaped median for the center lane between Cavalero Road and 91st Avenue SE. We appreciate receiving your second letter of comments, dated February 13, regarding impacts a median could have on emergency response times, longer distances to travel for emergency vehicles, and the difficulty of making U-turns. The Final EIS will state that the County will also evaluate an additional design option for the center turn lane in the form of a two-way left-turn lane.

Thank you for your comments.



7100 Hardeson Road
Everett, WA 98203-5834

www.communitytransit.org
425/348-7100 ph
425/348-2319 fax

Joyce F. Olson
Chief Executive Officer

January 23, 2008

Julie Highton
Senior Planner
Snohomish County Public Works
3000 Rockefeller
Everett, WA 98201

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Dear Ms. Highton:

Community Transit has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the 20th Street SE project and respectfully submits the following comments for the DEIS record.

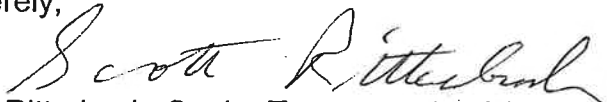
As you are aware, Community Transit's "2008-2013 Transit Development Plan" (TDP) has identified this portion of 20th Street SE as part of a greater "Transit Emphasis Corridor" linking Everett and Lake Stevens. For 2009 the Plan proposes service frequency and span of service improvements for the corridor. In order for those proposed service improvements to be effective, transit requires the type of infrastructure improvements included in the proposed 20th Street SE project. With this key understanding in mind, Community Transit supports the "Preferred Alternative" for 20th Street SE. This alternative will create several of the necessary roadway and infrastructure improvements that make transit accessible and provide HOV's a competitive advantage over SOV's.

In order to ensure the long-term competitive advantage of transit, Community Transit would like to continue discussions towards refining transit priority treatments such as "Queue Jumps" and/or "Transit Signal Priority". Additional attention to the 20th Street SE roadway design may also be necessary where the proposed three westbound lanes merge into two lanes just to the west of Cavalero Road. It is important that HOV's not be penalized at this merge point. Additional attention may also need to be focused further west where 20th merges with the Hwy 2 trestle. It is also important that HOV's not be penalized at this point. Finally, westbound Hwy 204 traffic should continue to be required to yield to westbound 20th traffic. Community Transit buses do not currently travel on Hwy 204 and are anticipated to remain on 20th.

Ultimately, the more complex congestion bottleneck of the Hwy 2 trestle will need to be addressed. Community Transit supports a "3-plus" designation for HOV lanes on 20th Street SE and any potential future HOV lanes on the Hwy 2 trestle. Regarding a potential surface route option on Ebey Island, it should not be assumed that transit buses currently traveling on 20th will use this surface route. If this option remains open for consideration, Community Transit believes further study needs to take place regarding the actual benefits to transit of traveling this surface route.

Beyond the specific infrastructure improvements and technology applications mentioned above, Community Transit supports continued cooperation with Snohomish County in developing and implementing a broader range of Transportation Demand Management strategies. We believe the cumulative effect of this cooperative effort will contribute to a more efficient utilization of the 20th Street SE corridor and create improved transportation options for citizens in the greater 20th Street SE area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Scott Ritterbush".

Scott Ritterbush, Senior Transportation Planner

cc: Carol Thompson, Supervisor of Service Planning and Scheduling
Roland Behee, Supervisor of Strategic Planning
Jennifer Hass, Promotions and Outreach Supervisor

County Response to Comment 8 (Community Transit)

The County looks forward to continuing discussions with Community Transit regarding transit priority treatments. We are currently working on a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) feasibility study for the 20th Street SE corridor. This study is looking at techniques and treatments that could be used to support the use of the proposed HOV lane and to encourage fewer single-occupancy vehicles traveling this corridor during the AM peak hour. Queue jumps and transit signal priority (TSP) are among the considerations on how to improve transit service discussed in this study. The results of the feasibility study will be presented to Community Transit for comment and further discussion.

Where travel lanes will merge west of Cavalero Road, an extension of the HOV lane is being considered to give an advantage to HOV. A queue jump for HOVs at the Cavalero Road traffic signal may also be incorporated. These issues will be addressed in the TDM study. We also understand your concerns about HOV not being penalized where 20th Street SE merges with the US 2 Trestle, and where westbound SR 204 yields to westbound 29th Street SE traffic. These merge points are a part of the ongoing discussions that the County is having with the Washington State Department of Transportation regarding the use of the US 2 Trestle. Other discussion topics include HOV lane treatments on the Trestle and potential for a surface route option. An AM peak westbound HOV lane on 20th, would most likely begin as a "2-plus" lane. Consideration of a "3-plus" designation would depend on conditions that would keep transit from maintaining its desired level of service. Any potential for a surface route option on Ebey Island for use by particular modes of westbound traffic to the I-5 corridor will require further study as you stated. Discussions with WSDOT are in a very preliminary stage and it will be necessary to evaluate all feasible options and how the corridor can best be designed for future traffic levels.