

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Argonne Road is a principal arterial serving the Town of Millwood (Town) and surrounding communities including Spokane County to the north and the City of Spokane Valley to the south. The limits of this study are the length of the Argonne Road corridor within the Town of Millwood, from the Trent Avenue intersection to the South Riverway intersection.

As one of only three vehicle crossings over the Spokane River east of the City of Spokane and a direct connection to the I-90 corridor, Argonne Road has an important role in moving regional traffic. Significant residential growth to the north of Millwood and improvements to Argonne Road to the north and south of the Town Limits have resulted in high levels of traffic congestion and concerns about the safety, livability and quality of the corridor and its relationship to the adjacent businesses and surrounding neighborhoods.

The Argonne Road Corridor Study (the Study) was initiated by the Town of Millwood in order to begin to address congestion-related issues that have developed within the corridor. At the highest level, the study serves to:

- Fully investigate and define the baseline conditions on Argonne Road currently, and for predicted future conditions.
- Identify, evaluate and document viable primary corridor transportation improvement concepts that support the Town's traffic and non-traffic related goals and objectives.

DEVELOPMENT OF PRIMARY CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT OPTIONS

Development of Baseline Conditions

In order to address the congestion-related issues in the Argonne Corridor, it was necessary to fully comprehend the baseline issues as they exist for Argonne Road in its current configuration today, and ahead into the future planning horizon if no improvements were made. A Baseline Conditions Report was developed to summarize the review of traffic operations, safety and roadway conditions of the Argonne Road corridor. This included analysis for morning and evening peak period traffic and congestion, examination of a three-year history of vehicle collisions, as well as identification of transportation operational and safety deficiencies. Also examined was the influence of train operations on Argonne corridor traffic. In brief, Argonne Road is a congested principal arterial that separates the east and west sides of the Town of Millwood.

Vision and Opportunities for Argonne

With the baseline conditions understood, it was time to develop an understanding of the Town's vision for the future of Argonne Road. Key needs and issues for safety, transportation mobility and overall livability along the Argonne Road corridor were identified through the evaluation of baseline conditions and confirmed by the project Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) and general public via SAC and Town Hall meetings.

From a traffic standpoint, the stakeholder and public sentiment recognizes the demand for Argonne to move vehicles and freight through the Town efficiently, while establishing an emphasis to manage

traffic safely within the Town of Millwood. From the community standpoint, the stakeholder and public sentiment reflects the strong desire to reclaim Argonne Road as a traditional “Main Street.” It is important that drivers moving through the Town on Argonne recognize that they are no longer on a high-speed rural route, rather they are passing through a community, where lower speeds and safety MUST take precedence over shaving seconds off a commute or delivery time.

Initial Screening of Ideas

All of the ideas collected from the initial SAC and Town Hall meeting were combined with ideas from Town Management and the consultant team to create a master list. The list was organized, and at the second SAC meeting, the SAC was guided through an initial screening process whereby the initial ideas were evaluated based on criteria developed from the project goals and objectives. The initial ideas were then pared down to four Primary Corridor Transportation Improvement Options. The SAC weeded out a number of Traffic Operations/Management Options, and settled on four primary corridor transportation Options that included:

- Option 1:** Optimize the Existing 4-Lane Road (Make the best of what’s there)
- Option 2:** Widen the 4-Lane Road for Left-Hand Turn Pockets at Signalized Intersections
- Option 3:** 4 to 3 Lane Conversion (Reduce roadway to three lanes)
- Option 4:** Widen Argonne to 5-Lanes

While some of these Options were controversial to various SAC members, the committee as a whole recognized that these Options encompass the feasible range of Traffic Operations/Management options for the Town to investigate within their jurisdiction.

The consultant team then developed packages for each identified primary transportation improvement Option that included applicable enhancements from the other categories of Options. Arterial traffic calming measures, as well as enhancements for non-motorized travel, transit, business access, truck and emergency vehicle access, and placemaking enhancements were included with each package to comprise four distinct DRAFT Primary Corridor Transportation Improvement Options (Options), which would be further analyzed in the study.

ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF OPTIONS

Development of Conceptual Layouts & Costs

Conceptual engineering layouts were prepared to illustrate each Option and identify applicable elements and impacts. For each Option, base improvement elements were identified, as well as enhancement opportunities.

Concept-level construction cost estimates were prepared for each of the Options, including enhancements, right-of-way costs, and engineering & construction management costs. This information will be useful to the Town not only for evaluation of the corridor improvement Options, but for seeking funding for future implementation projects.

Traffic Analysis

A traffic analysis was conducted for the corridor as a whole, including the intersection with Trent Avenue. The analysis revealed that operation on Argonne Road in Millwood is very dependent and influenced by the traffic operation at the Trent Avenue intersection – and in effect, the Trent Avenue signal provides a metering function for traffic on Argonne Road, during both the morning and evening

peak periods. Argonne Road is expected to continue to operate with congestion during the peak periods – regardless of which Option is selected.

- Option 1: The current configuration and traffic operation can be improved for side-street east-west access by modifying signal phasing and timing to slightly favor east-west traffic. This would result in a modest decline in north-south speed and operation.
- Option 2: Widening for left-turn pockets at the signals and modifying side-street timing can improve east-west access while maintaining north-south flows at an acceptable level.
- Option 3: Reducing the number of lanes within the roadway to provide bike lanes would result in significantly higher delays and congestion for both north-south and east-west flows, thereby reducing the overall function of the roadway. Traffic backups would extend beyond Millwood – becoming a broader problem.
- Option 4: Widening to five lanes would maintain north-south operation and provide for improved east-west access and operation.

There are improvements to be gained for east-west accessibility through signal timing and signal phasing to provide longer side-street timing and also provide for left-turn movements from the shared inside lanes. Note that these benefits for side-street traffic and pedestrians crossing Argonne Road would come at the expense of north-south travel time and flows. This is a modest shift in balance between the competing traffic demands in the corridor – one that can help the Town achieve more connection between the east and west areas of Millwood.

Implementation Strategy

The consultant team reviewed each Option for applicability to a number of Local, State and Federal funding opportunities. Depending on the nature of the funding source, and funding source requirements, an initial assessment of ‘fundability’ for each Option was performed. The net result is that there are a variety of ways to fund potential future projects, and a number of them should be pursued in the next available funding cycle.

Stakeholder Recommendations

At the third SAC meeting, the group ranked the four primary corridor improvement Options according to the evaluation criteria, applied Town-centric weighting to the criteria, and identified Option 1 as the preferred alternative. This option would serve to optimize the existing 4-lane roadway, and provide enhancements such as placemaking elements and arterial traffic calming elements to the community.

A second Town Hall meeting was held to communicate the process to date, review the four Options, and present the initial SAC recommendations for Option 1. After the presentation portion was complete, the public was asked to provide additional comments on the Options as well as vote for their preferred Option. The result of the public vote supported the SAC recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for implementation of the preferred Option are presented in the form of suggested near-term and potential capital improvement project packages, including potential funding opportunities.

Near-Term Implementation Strategies

The Town has secured federal funds for an upcoming Argonne Road Rebuild/Inlay project. This project represents a significant opportunity to include at least some of the Option 1 base

improvements. The Town should consider funding and including the following in the Rebuild/Inlay project:

- Completing sidewalks on Argonne
- Increasing visibility and safety at Argonne Road Crosswalks by utilizing pigmented and/or patterned concrete
- Constructing curb/sidewalk bulb-outs in the Historic District
- Improving traffic operations by altering pavement markings to include a small left-hand turn pocket on north-bound Argonne Road at Liberty
- Including conduit for future signal interconnect and coordination at concrete intersection locations, and perhaps throughout the length of the corridor
- Including conduit for future street and pedestrian lighting at concrete intersection locations, and perhaps throughout the length of the corridor
- Include conduit/duct bank for future use by utility purveyors
- Due to the fact that much of the roadway will be reconstructed as part of this project, it is important for the Town to also consider integrating any underground facilities that may be of interest at this time, such as undergrounding of the power, cable, and communication utilities along the corridor

Potential funding opportunities for these recommended additional Rebuild/Inlay Project scope items has been included in Section 6.

In the near term, the Town should also consider investing in a Safety Enforcement and Education campaign that would reinforce the 30mph speed limit within the Town, and remind drivers that their behavior needs to change accordingly within the limits of the Town.

Finally, the Town should consider conducting a Land Use Study along the Argonne Road Corridor in the near term, primarily to clearly define the Town's vision for redevelopment along the corridor, and ensure that this vision is harmonized with the vision and plans for Argonne Road as developed within this Study process.

Strategies for Future Capital Improvements Projects

The study includes a detailed listing of potential Local, State and Federal funding opportunities that may be considered by the Town for funding of future capital improvement projects. Locally, the town might consider forming a Roadway Improvement District (RID), utilize general funds, or create a special taxing district. At the state level, there are low interest loans available from the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) and grants are available from the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB). Federal grants may be obtained from application to the Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC). Federal grant sources include the Surface Transportation Program (STP), Urban Surface Transportation Program (STU), and Federal Transit Administration (5307). It is recommended that the Town pursue application during the next available funding cycle, which may yield results for the Town as early as 2009.

It should be noted that a number of grant-oriented funding sources are highly competitive and require a local match as well as demonstrated local support for the project. One of the most successful ways of demonstrating local support (and obtaining all or a portion of the local match funds) is to engage the local business community and identify funding partners. Regional

stakeholders, such as WSDOT, Spokane County, City of Spokane Valley, West Valley School District, and Spokane Valley Fire District should also be included in the process.

Strategies for Funding of Optional Enhancements

The Town of Millwood should also consider developing separate small projects to pursue construction of some of the more desirable enhancements as identified with the preferred Option, including:

- Multi-Use path along Spokane County right of way
- Sidewalk project along Grace
- Emergency signal at Frederick
- Gateway features
- Transit enhancements

A number of potential funding sources for these enhancements have been identified in Section 6 for the Town to consider pursuing.