

I-205 – Mill Plain Exit – 112th Connector Project

Open House #1

January 12, 2005

Meeting Summary

A project is currently underway to provide a direct connection to NE 112th Avenue from the northbound I-205 off-ramp to Mill Plain Boulevard. It is being designed and constructed as part of a joint effort between the city of Vancouver and the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT). This project will improve both safety and mobility in this rapidly growing area of east Vancouver. Preliminary design is well underway and construction is scheduled to begin in spring 2006.

This project represents strategic transportation improvements to the I-205 freeway ramp network and the Mill Plain Boulevard corridor that have been in the works for many years. Mill Plain Boulevard between I-205 and SE 164th Avenue has reached its maximum traffic capacity, which limits the area's development and traffic growth. The city of Vancouver is leading the I-205–Mill Plain Exit–112th Connector Project because it will help alleviate congestion on Mill Plain Boulevard and allow for anticipated future traffic growth.

Format

The first of two public open houses was held on January 12, 2005, from 6:00 to 8:00 pm at the new Cascade Middle School in Vancouver, Washington. It represented an important re-connection with the community, and the first project update provided in several years.

The open house was held shortly before the project reached 60% design, providing an overview and update (including purpose, need and benefits, schedule and proposed design elements; engineering completed to date; an overview of the outreach process; and upcoming opportunities for public involvement). The open house also included information about related projects in the area, such as the I-205 Corridor Environmental Assessment.

Participants were invited to drop by anytime between 6:00 and 8:00 pm to view displays and speak with project staff. The meeting format was informal and supported by graphics and displays that portrayed the elements of the project in a visual manner. Easels were placed in a large semi circle around the room, creating three stations: (1) welcome to the open house, vicinity map, purpose and need, project timeline; (2) before and after design visualizations; and (3) upcoming public involvement opportunities and team contact information. Tables were available for filling out comment forms, and one large hands-on map of the proposed ramp improvements was placed in the center of the room. Post-it notes were provided for map-related comments, and flip charts were available near the display stations.

Varied methods for comment and interaction were available, such as one-to-one discussions with project staff, comment forms, contact information and the project Web page. City staff collected all public comment submitted at the open house and will provide responses to inquiries. Open house participants who chose to submit their comment forms after the open house were asked to mail them directly to city staff.

Public outreach for this project will continue through the start of construction in spring 2006. Two more newsletters will be mailed to residents and businesses in the project area, and a second open house will occur just prior to construction.

Notification

- Newsletter announced the open house (postmarked three weeks prior to meeting)
- Newsletter distribution included the General and Stakeholder Mailing Lists (a total of 4,451 residential and business addresses)
- One w3.75"x h4.25" newspaper display ad was placed in *The Columbian* (Sunday, Jan. 2, Thursday, Jan. 6 and Sunday, Jan. 9 in the Neighborhood and Local Clark County sections)
- Press release announced the event
- Announcement was placed on the WSDOT project Web page

Displays and Handouts

- Displays included a large, hands-on table-top map of proposed ramp improvements; welcome, vicinity map and purpose and need; before/after design visualizations; and project timeline, upcoming opportunities for public involvement and team contact information.
- Additional displays for the I-205 Corridor Environmental Assessment (WSDOT) and the NE 18th Street Project (City) were available for viewing
- 8.5 x 11 copies of each display board were available
- Comment forms were available

Staffing

Jeff Schmidt, City of Vancouver
Brooke Porter, City of Vancouver
Marc Aerts, WSDOT
Jilayne Jordan, WSDOT
Casey Liles, WSDOT
Christine Edwards, WSDOT
Gary Richardson, Skillings-Connolly
Gerry Danielson, Skillings-Connolly
Meg O'Leary, Skillings-Connolly

Comments Gathered at the Open House

The comments included below were gathered from the 11 written comment forms submitted at the open house, one flip chart comment, and discussions between project staff and open house participants. This summary does not include any comments forms that may have been mailed directly to the city. All comments listed here are direct transcriptions, however in some cases, minor edits were made for clarity and spelling. The comments have been rearranged under topic headings for easy reference.

I-205

- Will WSDOT be placing any type of noise wall in conjunction with construction of the new interchange?
- Series of interchanges along I-205 are much needed

18th Street

- Improve and construct NE 18th Street interchange before making improvements to Mill Plain Blvd

- This project (I-205 – Mill Plain Exit – 112th Connector Project) should not be the first. The first should be at 18th.
- New interchange at 18th Street is a good idea, but it might create too much east-west traffic on 18th Street.
- To what location would 18th Street be extended to?
- Mixed views as to whether or not the road should terminate at 97th or 87th
- Concern about environmental impacts
- When would the EA be released for public review and comment?
- Concern about right-of-way acquisition and possible removal of houses

112th Avenue

- Concern about narrow lanes that currently exist along 112th
- Concerns about where 4th Street and Major Street intersect with 112th—it's not safe for pedestrians and has limited pedestrian access
- Would sidewalks be added to 112th as part of this project?
- Concern about customer access to and from Joe's Orchards via NE 112th Avenue
- Concern about safety of school children and pedestrians who use 112th
- Concerned about the narrow lanes on 112th. When the roadway was expanded from three to five lanes, it should have been widened. Lanes are too narrow and cause undue stress for drivers. It is not fair to put citizens at risk just because the city would rather narrow the lanes with paint to get more drivers on the road. I highly recommend the city change the road back to three lanes until they can save enough money to get it done right.
- Lanes too narrow
- Safety for pedestrians not available
- With added signal at NW ramp terminal and 112th, a break in traffic may not occur. It is currently very difficult to access 112th. This new signal may make it impossible.
- Exit should be taken to 9th Street instead of 112th as proposed.

Burton/112th

- When will the new intersection be completed?

Chkalov Drive

- Decrease back-up on Chkalov by letting vehicles in the through-lane turn right

Mill Plain Blvd

- No stripe on bridge for the weave area between ramps
- Signal timing should be improved to help backup in the weave area
- The only comment I have is in response to something I overheard. Please do not put another stop light on Mill Plain. We have gridlock on Mill Plain as it is.

New Connector Ramp

- How many vehicles per day (or what percentage of traffic) would utilize the new 112th connector ramp?
- Will WSDOT close northbound onramp during construction?

Other comments

- Contact the Fircrest Neighborhood Association about plans on impact to neighborhood. Concern about increased noise levels.
- I am concerned that this plan (which I think is a good idea) may generate a substantial increase in NE traffic on 11th north of the new light. Many who now stay on I-205 to SR-500 and then go south on 112th will now find it is faster to use this new 112th exit.
- Make a 3rd (merge) lane on East Mill Plain (west) overpass. For Mill Plain west merge, paint a line to make a 3rd lane on the overpass so that cars don't rush over as fast and make the cars coming off the freeway stop. Paint a line to make a merge lane like other overpasses in the county. The problem is that without a line painted, there are too many cars that want to go I-205 south and rush over thinking it is their lane, making some cars stop. This will make it more of a merge lane rather than the mess that it is now. All this takes is some paint.
- Gas station owner is pleased because this new ramp will improve access to his business
- General consensus at open house: this project appears to help traffic flow in the area
- Nice work. Fircrest Neighborhood Association is opposed to opening 9th Street to 136th. Please honor our concerns. Thanks.
- Add right-turn lane for better traffic flow into hospital entrance at 92nd and 87th and along Mill Plain Blvd
- 11th Avenue needs to be widened. Since the change, the lanes are far too narrow. Middle turn lanes aren't necessary if there are no streets to turn off of.
- Good concept. Suggestion: Move exit down to 9th Street, right turn only, then onto 112th Avenue (presently a light at 112th Avenue).
- Put a permanent green right turn arrow on Mill Plain eastbound by the overpass of I-205, pointing to the on-ramp on I-205 southbound. Cars are never required to stop to make that turn. Drivers that are unfamiliar with the area will stop at the top of that on-ramp when the light is red for traffic on Mill Plain eastbound. There is never a reason to stop there. Cross traffic at the off-ramp from I-205 southbound to Mill Plain eastbound doesn't have access to the southbound on-ramp at Mill Plain to I-205 south. Cars that stop needlessly cause pile ups.
- Since this project impacts the western boundary of the Fircrest Neighborhood Association, it might be nice to inform the people who live here of the plan.
- Are traffic models available for before and after traffic totals?