# BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
# CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

**AB 6421**
**March 19, 2024**
**Regular Business**

## AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

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| **TITLE:** | AB 6421: Island Crest Way Corridor Improvements Project Update | ☒ Discussion Only<br>☐ Action Needed:<br>☐ Motion<br>☐ Ordinance<br>☐ Resolution |
| **RECOMMENDED ACTION:** | Receive project update. No action necessary. | |

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| **DEPARTMENT:** | Public Works |
| **STAFF:** | Jason Kintner, Chief of Operations<br>Patrick Yamashita, Deputy PW Director/City Engineer<br>Clint Morris, Capital Division Manager |
| **COUNCIL LIAISON:** | n/a |
| **EXHIBITS:** | 1. Draft Shared Use Path Conceptual Design Summary Memo |
| **CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:** | 3. Make once-in-a-generation investments to update and modernize aging infrastructure, capital facilities, and parks. |

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| **AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE** | $ n/a |
| **AMOUNT BUDGETED** | $ n/a |
| **APPROPRIATION REQUIRED** | $ n/a |

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda bill is to present information and provide an update on the Island Crest Way Corridor Improvement Project, focusing on the preliminary draft of shared use path alternatives. Staff is not seeking a decision from the City Council on a preferred shared use path alternative but looking for City Council feedback on the options presented. There are three main shared use path alternatives:

- Path on west side of ICW
- Path on east side of ICW
- Separated bike lanes

The Shared Use Path Conceptual Design Summary Memo provided in Exhibit 1 discusses each alternative including likely impacts and design considerations. Each alternative results in differing levels of impacts on impervious surface, utilities, trees, privacy hedges, construction impacts to the public, and cost.

## BACKGROUND

The Island Crest Way Safety Analysis was performed in 2021-2022 to identify and evaluate safety issues along the Island Crest Way (ICW) corridor near Island Park Elementary School. This effort included community engagement through a Let's Talk page and an online community survey to solicit feedback on their experience

and identify safety concerns along the corridor. The most frequent concerns expressed in the survey summary include pedestrian and bicycle safety and the need for improved lighting. The analysis concluded with a presentation to the City Council on March 15, 2022 (AB 6037). This led to the City Council approving the inclusion of the ICW Corridor Improvement project (Project) in the 2023-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the 2023-2024 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget. Public Works Right-of-Way crews have implemented many of the short-term recommendations such as vegetation trimming, improving signage, adding reflective sleeves on crosswalk warning signposts, refreshing pavement marking, and repairing streetlights.

The Project is one mile long from 90th Avenue SE, south to SE 68th Street. It includes implementing the Safety Analysis recommended short-term improvement of three crosswalks planned for construction this summer. It also starts the process of implementing recommended long-term improvements of intersections at SE 53rd Place and SE 68th Street, and a shared use path through the corridor beginning with feasibility/preliminary design. The formal design and construction for these long-term projects will be proposed in future TIPs following the conclusion of the preliminary design efforts. The City Council requested that evaluation of design alternatives be considered for the shared use path between these intersections prior to construction of the intersection improvements. The presentation on Tuesday night will be an initial look at the design alternatives.

## ISSUE/DISCUSSION

Following the March 15, 2022 presentation, the City Council adopted the following ICW Corridor Improvements into the 2023-2028 Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program on June 7, 2022 (AB6099) for 2023-2024 and included it in the 2023-2024 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget.

The primary goals of the project as stated on Let's Talk are to:

1. Improve safety along the corridor by designing more dedicated marked crossings and enhanced lighting throughout the corridor.
2. Develop a multi-modal corridor that provides safe and efficient movement for pedestrians, bikers, and vehicles.
3. Provide connections to existing trail systems and safe crossings to trails.
4. Encourage community members to help the City clearly identify the existing issues and explore opportunities to meet project goals.
5. Improve access to transit along the corridor.
6. Preserve the urban forest and existing tree canopy while balancing safety and available right of way space to achieve project goals.

The Project elements included in the 2023-2024 CIP include:

1. Crosswalk Improvements Project (design & construction)
2. Shared Use Path
    a. Pre-Design (conceptual design alternatives)
    b. Illumination Study
    c. Corridor-Wide Tree Condition Assessment
3. Intersection Design Feasibility Study (right turn lane on SE 53rd Place, roundabout at SE 68th Street)

The overall project goal to develop a multi-modal corridor is complex, requiring tradeoffs, balancing the benefits of improving safety in the corridor while minimizing impacts to the urban forest and built environment and doing so at an affordable cost.

**Project Elements**

Crosswalk Improvements

The purpose of the crosswalk improvements is to improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists crossing at three key locations in the corridor. The design of these crosswalks is complete, and the project will be advertised for bids this month with the majority of construction planned for this summer. These pedestrian safety improvements include upgrading the existing Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacon (RRFB) with a pedestrian signal at the crosswalk near the parking lot exit from Island Park Elementary School and new RRFB crosswalks at SE 62nd Street and SE 63rd Street. These crosswalks will supplement the existing RRFB crosswalk located north of SE 58th Street serving Island Crest Park. The signal poles and controllers are long lead time items due to production and supply chain issues. While they are in procurement, the rest of the construction will occur this summer when school is out. These improvements are being constructed ahead of the other project improvements to improve safety for those crossing Island Crest Way.

Shared Use Path Pre-Design

This work is well underway and has been the primary focus of the design team. The conceptual path alignments take into consideration information provided in the draft Illumination Study and draft Tree Condition Assessment. The concept level designs work to avoid significant trees where possible. Nevertheless, many trees will need to be removed to accommodate any shared use path alternative since the ICW corridor is heavily treed where construction will need to occur. Replacement trees will be planted to restore the urban forest and tree canopy over time. The consultant team has developed three main draft conceptual design alternative alignments with an option on one alternative. Each alternative has tradeoffs, benefits, and impacts with the goal of improving pedestrian and bicyclist safety. Additional information regarding the shared use path alternatives is provided in the Shared Use Path Alternatives Analysis below and in the Shared Use Path Conceptual Design Summary memo in Exhibit 1.

Draft Illumination Study

The draft Illumination Study analyzed lighting levels along the corridor roadway segments and at intersections. All existing streetlights in the corridor were updated to LED as a follow up to the Safety Analysis. The study revealed that some intersections meet illumination target values, but others do not. Continuous roadway and pedestrian scale lighting is not a requirement but is recommended due to collision history and pedestrian use during non-daylight hours. The study includes the following prioritized list of improvements and their status:

**High Priority**

- Ensure all high-pressure sodium vapor luminaires have been replaced with LED luminaires – This work has been completed.
- Ensure all existing luminaires are functioning properly – This work has been completed.
- Install proposed lighting improvements at SE 62nd Street and SE 63rd Street – This project is included in the Crosswalk Improvement Design.

**Medium Priority**

- Install continuous lighting along the corridor or construct a separated shared-use path with continuous pedestrian scale lighting – This work is included in the Shared Path Design.
- Install enhanced intersection lighting at five intersections needing enhancement – This work is included in the Shared Use Path Design.

**Low Priority**

- Install enhanced intersection lighting at SE 53rd and SE 61st Streets – This work is included in the Shared Use Path Design.

Draft Tree Condition Assessment

The trees along the corridor are part of a broad network of trees and ecosystems spanning the island. Along Island Crest Way, Sycamores and Oaks were planted over 50 years ago making them historically significant. The trees provide a consistent canopy in various locations and many residents have noted that driving south through the tree-lined corridor provides a sense of "coming home." The draft Tree Condition Assessment summarizes the tree health assessments conducted on trees located along ICW, between 90th Avenue SE and SE 68th Street along with the potential impacts of proposed project improvements. The assessments were performed by an International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) certified arborist using ISA tree assessment rating criteria.

Approximately 550 small, large, and exceptional trees were assessed. Most assessed trees are located within the public right of way and include American Sycamore, London Plane, English Oak, and native species such as Western Red Cedar, Douglas Fir, and Bigleaf Maple. In general, the health of most of the trees fall in the "good" and "good/low" categories based on ISA rating criteria with no significant issues. The health ratings consider the corridor's ecosystem resilience, owing to its adaptive capacity, a hardy historic canopy, good biodiversity with native species dominance, and connectivity. The "good" category is based on a canopy density of 60-90%, small branch failure, and minor pests while "good/low" is based on 60-70% canopy density, larger branch failure, and minor pests. Trees in the good or good/low category are expected to survive for several more decades.

The high voltage powerline along the east side of ICW has affected the health of the historic canopy trees due to powerline clearance pruning, which has caused the trees to lean toward ICW and produce compensation sprouts (suckers). The infill trees growing along the corridor are native and have grown naturally in their current location. Their health ranges from declining to good. The east side includes several Western Red Cedars behind the existing path and pockets of native trees near Dragon Park and Island Crest Park on the west side. Trees near these parks and Pioneer Park have greater biodiversity and include trees such as Bigleaf Maple, Douglas Fir, and Madrona ranging in age from 10 years to over 60 years. The presence of the urban environment and roadway has adversely affected several native infill trees. Over the past 20 to 30 years, some younger canopy trees have been planted in certain locations. However, like other trees in the corridor, the young canopy exhibits various health conditions.

Determining which improvement has the most significant impact is complicated. The Separated Bike Lanes alternative may remove trees on both sides of the corridor, leaving little significant canopy. The East Side alternative removes much of the historic canopy, but it lies below the powerlines and has been severely impacted by constant pruning over the years. The West Side alternative removes trees with a larger diameter but are often near the end of their lifespan or in low health. Trees on both sides of ICW provide benefits to the community. All three alternatives will significantly alter the feel of ICW until a new canopy can grow in place.

Intersection Design Feasibility Study

The Design Feasibility Study is underway and will be complete by Q4 2024. It will provide a conceptual design for a westbound right turn lane at the SE 53rd Place intersection and a roundabout at the SE 68th Street intersection. The study will establish the groundwork for future formal design efforts. These projects are intended to improve safety and traffic flow.

**Shared Use Path Alternatives Analysis**

Exhibit 1 provides an analysis of the three shared use path alternatives – path on east side, path on west side, separated bike lane in roadway. It includes graphical representations of the three alternatives providing cross-sectional views, a high-level view of the alternatives, and a zoomed-in view showing the path alignments overlayed onto an aerial image of the ICW corridor so residents and interested parties can see the likely impacts along ICW including adjacent to the edges of right of way where there are several large hedges and fences. Trees that will likely require removal to accommodate construction are also noted. The east side path alternative includes an "Option A" which shifts part of the path alignment away from ICW. This improves pedestrian safety and retains 10 to 15 large trees but requires removing large laurel hedges along the east edge of right of way from Island Park Elementary School to SE 59th Street. Hedges could be replaced with screening for the abutting property owners.

Additional lighting is included in all alternatives to improve the use of the trail during times of darkness, especially during the winter for school-age kids, their parents, and other trail users.

For the sake of comparing impacts between alternatives, several metrics are provided including new impervious surface, level of utility impacts, number trees to be removed, percentage of tree canopy removed, storm drainage modifications, pedestrian/vehicle impacts during construction, and cost. This comparison is shown in the table below.

| Alternative | New Impervious Surface | Utility Impacts | Trees Removed | Tree Canopy Removed | Drainage Mods | Vehicle Impacts (const. stage) | Ped Impacts (const. stage) | Const. Cost (order of magnitude) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Separated Bike Lane | ~70,000sf | med | 110 to 120 | ~40% | high | high | med | high |
| East Side Path | ~15,000sf | high | 85 to 99 | ~34% | med | low | high | med |
| East Side Path (Option A) | ~15,000sf | high | 70 to 85 | ~30% to ~32% | med | low | high | med |
| West Side Path | ~24,000sf | low | 75 to 94 | ~28% | low | low | low | med |

Planning level estimated costs for the separated bike lane alternative is $12M-$14M, east side shared use path is $3.5M-$6M, and west side shared use path is $3M-$5.5M based on the consultant's experience and recent comparable projects. These estimated costs do not include right of way acquisition if needed. Should the City secure federal funding to support the work, the project cost could increase by up to 20% to cover the additional administrative reporting and construction requirements tied to the grant. Staff and the consultant will provide additional information regarding the alternatives on Tuesday night.

Community Engagement

The Let's Talk community engagement page for the project went live in October 2023. This is the primary source of project information and updates for the community. The virtual open house scheduled for January 2024 was paused to first provide Tuesday's project update to the City Council focusing on an initial discussion of the shared use path alternatives. This agenda bill will be posted on Let's Talk once it's published and available to the community in advance of the City Council meeting, so the public has an opportunity to read the information and watch the City Council meeting. Updates will be provided to keep the public informed as the project progresses.

**City Council Direction**

The overarching purpose of the safety analysis and Island Crest Way Corridor Improvements is to provide incremental improvements to safety. The corridor improvements are safety-specific improvements

recommended in the safety analysis. The crosswalk improvements target crossings of ICW at key locations. The shared use path provides an improved place to walk and ride. The intersection improvements enhance traffic flow while improving pedestrian and vehicle safety. As the City contemplates developing a shared use path along the corridor, staff seeks feedback from the City Council on the draft shared use path alternatives. These questions were developed to guide the City Council's discussion:

- What additional information would be helpful for the City Council to help support the selection of a set of preferred alternatives to present to the public for feedback?
- What questions does the City Council have?
- Should staff pursue further development of East Side Path Option A?

The public has not had an opportunity to provide formal feedback yet, so staff is not seeking any decisions from the City Council on the shared use path alternatives.

## NEXT STEPS

City staff will take the input received from the City Council, continue with refinements, and return to the City Council with additional information and responses to questions on the draft shared use path alternatives. The community engagement process will proceed once the City Council identifies the set of preferred alternatives to present to the community for feedback. Staff will share the feedback received with the City Council to guide the selection of a preferred path alternative.

As planning continues for the overall corridor improvements, staff will develop a project phasing plan for implementation of the project elements along the corridor (shared use path, lighting, right turn lane at SE 53rd Place, and roundabout at SE 68th Street). This plan will likely span a six-to-ten-year timeframe and will take into consideration potential grant funding opportunities.

## RECOMMENDED ACTION

Receive project update and provide feedback to staff.