



**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND, WASHINGTON**

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DATE: May 4, 2023

TO: Mercer Island City Council

FROM: Parks and Recreation Commission
Jodi McCarthy, Chair, Peter Struck, Vice Chair, Don Cohen, Paul Burstein, Sara Marxen,
Rory Westberg, Ashley Hay

SUBJECT: Recommendation on Aubrey Davis Park Trail Safety Improvements 30% Design

The Mercer Island Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) presents our recommendation on the Aubrey Davis Park Trail Safety Improvements 30% Design.

Summary Recommendation:

Our recommendation is to proceed to a 60% Design phase with further review by the Parks and Recreation Commission at the conclusion of that phase.

The PRC commenced review of this matter on April 7, 2022 and discussed the topic over six meetings. The project design team collected public input through a virtual open house held on February 17, 2022 and an online survey conducted from February 17 to March 17, 2022, as well as public comments received via the project page on Let's Talk, emails, and from speakers at Commission meetings. The open house was attended by 24 people, and survey responses were received from 86 participants. This input from interested citizens and user groups was presented to the PRC for consideration before and during the course of its deliberations.

The 30% Design provides significant improvements to the intersections at the 72nd Avenue underpass area and the ballfield/restroom area intended to reduce speeds, channelize cross-trail traffic and alert all users to the "mixing zone" they are entering. The 30% design also includes minor signage, pavement markings and wayfinding at other intersections along the I-90 trail throughout the Lid Park.

Project Priorities:

The design prioritizes improvements that will directly enhance trail safety and focuses major improvements at the ballfield/restroom area, which is a critical area of concern.

Focus on safety

The PRC initially considered a suite of improvements that were collected from public input. With the limited budget, the PRC chose to prioritize improvements that would directly enhance safety. The utility of other improvements such as benches, kiosks, and pull-out areas was not as clear.

Focus on the ballfield/restroom and 72nd Ave. underpass areas

The initial design included substantial improvements at the West Mercer Way crossing. The PRC concluded that these improvements, while potentially useful, were not as critical to trail safety as the improvements proposed for the ballfield/restroom area and the 72nd Avenue underpass area. The PRC concluded that the project should focus trail improvements in those areas. In particular, the importance of safety enhancements at the entrance to the ballfield/restroom area, at the 72nd Avenue underpass, was identified as key to controlling traffic flow before trail users enter the “mixing zone” near the restroom.

Using concrete pavement to better define the ballfield/restroom mixing zone will further signal the need to be alert to the areas where park users enter the trail. Installation of low-level fencing will channel pedestrians to marked crossings and improve predictability for pedestrians and cyclists.

Several different options for the 72nd Ave. underpass area were considered over multiple Commission meetings. In addition to staff analysis and citizen input, the Commission solicited and received information and testimony from the Washington State Dept. of Transportation (WSDOT), the owner of the property.

On March 2, 2023, the Commission considered three options – two options contained concrete roundabouts and one option did not. WSDOT noted that all three options were acceptable. The Commission voted in favor of the option without a roundabout given that there is no evidence that a traffic feature of this magnitude is needed at this time. The preferred option features improved sight lines by removing vegetation, increases awareness with signage and pavement markings, and restores trail shoulders.

The recommended design improves safety, with the smallest increase in impervious surface, and lowest cost. Although City staff and the design consultant favored a roundabout model for the 72nd Ave. underpass area, they concur that the option the Commission chose will improve the safety at this trail intersection. The Commission notes that if trail usage increases, and if evidence indicates that a roundabout feature would further improve the safety of the area, this may be considered in future years.

Stay within the available budget:

While budget decisions are ultimately the City Council’s responsibility, trying to stay within budget as much as possible, while still including meaningful safety improvements, was a factor considered by the Commissioners.

Other Considerations:

On June 2, the PRC and the Mercer Island Arts Council held a joint meeting and discussed opportunities to integrate art and/or placemaking elements into the project that would be consistent with the Aubrey

Davis Park Master Plan. The PRC understands that placemaking elements incorporated into the trail could foster more considerate behaviors among trail users but also wants any features to be compatible with the park's natural landscape, including employing judicious selection of themes and colors. These recommendations will be transmitted to the Arts Council to further inform their discussions of how to use the project's 1% for Art in Public Places contribution (approximately \$3,500).

Conclusion:

We look forward to seeing this project advance to 60% Design and request the opportunity to provide our recommendation at the completion of that phase.