



Corporate Report

NO: R064

COUNCIL DATE: APRIL 16, 2007

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: **April 12, 2007**
FROM: **General Manager, Engineering** PROJECT FILE: **1706-006**
SUBJECT: **Median Issues and Median on King George Highway: 152 Street to 24 Avenue**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Engineering Department recommends that Council:

1. Endorse the policy of providing shared left-in access where medians are constructed and where three or more commercial properties can benefit.
2. Receive as information the proposed median design on King George Highway: 152 Street to 24 Avenue.

BACKGROUND

In the early 1990s Council adopted, as part of the Urban Forest initiative, road standards that called for more boulevard planting and the construction of landscaped medians when roads are widened to four lanes. The purpose of raised medians is primarily to improve safety as the medians control left-turns to specific locations and provide a safe space for left-turning traffic to wait for an opportunity to turn. Protected left-turns also avoid the problems of turning traffic blocking the through travel lanes and provide a safe central refuge for pedestrians crossing the arterial roads. ICBC supports the City's efforts to improve safety through its median construction and has provided the City with between \$0.5 million to \$1.0 million every year for the last four or five years.

As well as providing safety benefits and improved through traffic capacity, medians provide an excellent opportunity for landscaping and enhancing arterial streetscapes in the City. For travelers passing through the City, and for residents traveling within the City, the most City landscaping they will see will be along the roadways and the impression they gain of the City as a whole is the one conveyed by the streetscape. Landscaping within the medians has evolved over the years to provide high quality horticultural displays of flowers, shrubs, and trees, giving the City a much greener image than endless grey paved central turn lanes.

Access Issues

The provision of medians does however come with some impacts; namely, reduction in access to fronting properties. In an attempt to balance the safety and visual advantages against the loss of access, where operationally feasible, staff have adopted the approach that protected left-in access will be provided in commercial areas; if three or more properties share a common left-in access point with appropriate cross access agreements.

If left-in access were provided at every commercial property, the median would be virtually eliminated and be replaced by a center two-way left-turn lane, with consequent reduction in safety and visual amenity.

Proposed Median on King George Highway

Two projects for the widening of King George Highway; from 152 Street to 24 Avenue, and from 24 Avenue to 156 Street, have received TransLink approval for MRN cost sharing. The first project, from 152 Street to 24 Avenue, commenced construction at the beginning of April 2007. The design is shown on the attached drawings (Appendix 1) and is proposed to include landscaped medians. The properties fronting King George Highway, between 26 Avenue and 156 Street, are predominantly commercial use. Some of the owners and tenants have voiced concern over the potential loss of left turn access, should a continuous raised median be constructed throughout this section. Consequently a left-in direct access is proposed to a group of properties/businesses in the northeast quadrant of King George Highway/24 Avenue where reciprocal access agreements have been reached. (This access also extends to properties fronting on 24 Avenue).

To provide access to these and other commercial properties, it is proposed to provide for U-turns on King George Highway – at the intersection with 26 Avenue (which will be signalized) and at a mid-block location to the north of 24 Avenue. This requires widening the exit leg of the U to a three-lane width for adequate turning radius for passenger vehicles and delivery vans. (Large trucks will not be able to negotiate the U-turn.) This type of U-turn provision is used extensively for similar land use situations in some U.S. locations but this will be its first application in Surrey. The U-turns will thus provide for a full range of traffic movements within short distance of all the properties and the concept has received favourable response from property owners.

Staff facilitated a meeting of property owners for purposes of discussion of cross access agreements and access consolidation and explained that if three or more owners could come to an agreement, additional left-in direct access would be provided. A further meeting was held with one owner, interested in this, to review concepts that could be discussed with neighbouring owners. Subsequent meetings of staff with these owners, and their tenants, indicate that they are reasonably satisfied with the U-turn provision and do not wish to participate in cross access agreements in order to obtain inbound left turn direct access.

Design of the second project, from 24 Avenue to 156 Street, tentatively planned for construction in 2008, is also underway and an Open House was conducted on the evening of January 23, 2007. A concept was presented for a left-turn access for the properties

along the west side of King George Highway, based on reciprocal accesses (see attached drawing Appendix 2). Property owner response to this concept at the Open House was not favourable. A U-turn provision was also discussed for this block, as an alternative, and received some interest. This matter will be investigated further, with further property owner discussion as the design progresses.

The proposed median and U-turn facilities on King George Highway were reviewed by the Transportation Committee who considered it and recommended that it be forwarded to Council for information.

CONCLUSION

Landscaped medians along City arterial roadways offer safety and capacity benefits along with enhanced streetscapes. However, particularly in areas with commercial land use, the owners and business operators are concerned about the resulting reduction in uncontrolled, full-movement access. Staff is of the view that the practice of providing shared left-in access to any three or more commercial properties is a reasonable balance between these competing interests. Provision for U-turns at select locations where feasible, as will be tested on King George Highway between 26 Avenue and 24 Avenue, offers the potential for maintenance of a high degree of full-movement access along with the operational, safety and aesthetic benefits of landscaped medians.

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Attachment