City of Dublin

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Memo

To: Members of Dublin City Council

From: Marsha I. Grigsby, City Manager

Date: November 12, 2014

Initiated By: Terry Foegler, Director of Special Initiatives
Megan O'Callaghan, PE, Director of Public Service
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Re: Riverside Drive Pedestrian Underpass

BACKGROUND

As recently requested by City Council, Staff reviewed information related to the Bridge Street District and the City's infrastructure projects to determine what discussions had occurred regarding the potential pedestrian underpass to be constructed as part of the Riverside Drive Realignment. The potential location of a pedestrian underpass was first discussed as part of the September 2013 work session which reviewed the preliminary engineering outcomes from the MKSK led Bridge Street District (BSD) River Corridor public improvements studies. This information was further shared with the public as part of a larger October 2013 public presentation and forum held at the OCLC conference Center, as well as with the Dublin Planning and Zoning Commission at its meeting in November of 2013. Information from all of these sessions, including comments from residents expressed at the public forum regarding safety concerns about crossing Riverside Drive, were provided to City Council in December of 2013. At that time staff indicated that the feasibility of a Riverside Drive pedestrian underpass was being studied near the relocated Riverside Drive's intersection with the future John Shields Parkway.

The possibility of a pedestrian underpass was advanced in response to considerable discussion and questions raised about safe pedestrian access to and from the new park along the Scioto River as well as to the new destinations planned for the developments east of relocated Riverside Drive. The pedestrian underpass was seen as a means to provide a pedestrian crossing of Riverside Drive that would be totally separated from vehicular traffic. The underpass is intended to provide an alternate safe means of access for those residents and visitors who want to visit the park planned along the east bank of the river as well as the planned pedestrian bridge across the river. The selection of the John Shields Parkway intersection location for the underpass had resulted primarily from an analysis which demonstrated significant obstacles restricting opportunities for an underpass at more southern locations along Riverside Drive.

In March of 2014, City Council authorized the Administration to proceed with the final engineering for the new SR 161 – Riverside Drive roundabout and the relocation of Riverside Drive. As part of that authorization, the administration asked City Council to affirm several key components from the preliminary engineering studies (these included major infrastructure components such as the alignment of the new Riverside Drive, the selection of the identified roundabout as the preferred intersection solution, affirmation of the pedestrian bridge and future vehicular bridge alignments). The Administration perceived, perhaps incorrectly, that there was general support for the pedestrian underpass, but that its feasibility would be better understood as the final engineering process moved forward.

The pedestrian underpass, and the issues associated with its design and implementation, were further addressed as part of the recent 60% construction plans recently completed for the Riverside Drive Realignment project. The development of the 60% design plans has shown the pedestrian underpass to be feasible at the John Shields Parkway location, and has helped the engineering and design team better understand its impacts upon utilities, as well as its impacts upon the John Shields Parkway Greenway, and has allowed for the preparation of a design level cost estimate. The advancement of the design plans has also more fully vetted how pedestrians and cyclists can safely cross Riverside Drive at street level (at-grade) and identified the measures that can be taken to enhance the quality of the pedestrian realm at street level. Because of the information now available, it is a good time for Council to assess and make a final determination regarding this piece of the planned infrastructure. However, a decision will be needed quickly since delays would impact both the design and construction schedule.

PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT ACROSS RIVERSIDE DRIVE

As currently designed, the underpass connects the John Shields Parkway Greenway with the proposed Riverside Park. Every effort is being made to transform Riverside Drive into a more pedestrian-friendly street ensuring that residents, employees and visitors of the Bridge Street District on the east side do not face barriers to many of the prime amenities of the district (the Riverside Park, Pedestrian Bridge and by extension the Historic Dublin and the Scioto River). The underpass was seen as a desirable alternative that would serve both pedestrians and bicyclists crossing Riverside Drive, and which would be totally separated from vehicular traffic at the street level crossings.

As currently designed (Option A on the Attachment), the pedestrian underpass is a crossing alternative for those who may not be as *comfortable* crossing at street grade (although the street level pedestrian and bicycle crossings will be fully accessible) . With the recent completion of the 60% plans, several important design attributes relating to pedestrian movement and comfort have been addressed including; the Riverside Drive relocation project can accommodate on-street parking along significant portions of both sides of Riverside Drive; the project will include brick inlaid intersections to help create awareness of the pedestrian nature of the area; and the project will include traffic control signals with protected walk phases that better accommodate pedestrian crossings. The tree-lined streets, the other previously approved public realm streetscape enhancements, and the active river park and future abutting private development projects will further emphasize the pedestrian scale of the area and should help further calm traffic. These well designed features and operational details provide safe and appropriate opportunities for street level pedestrian crossings across Riverside Drive, and will help mitigate many of the effects of the higher traffic volumes on this roadway. Some of the roadway's design details are highlighted in the Attachment.

The 60% plans more clearly demonstrate impacts of the proposed "fully accessible" entryway system and pedestrian underpass, and there are some concerns regarding the impacts upon the John Shields Parkway Greenway in this area, as well as upon the future buildings abutting that Greenway. The entryway (stairs & ADA compliant ramp) to the Greenway would occupy most of the Greenway area along John Shields Parkway between Mooney Street and Riverside Drive Realignment as shown as Option A in the Attachment. One strong advantage of this current design is that it allows entering pedestrians and bicyclists to see "daylight" as they enter and travel through the underpass and its approaches. Other existing pedestrian underpasses in Dublin are

not built in this manner, and are not considered the ADA accessibility compliant crossings (with such crossings being provided at street grade in those existing locations).

The Option A in the Attachment depicts the currently planned ramp and stairs entrance system to the underpass (showing the extent of the impacted areas), a possible more compact (and less disruptive) stair entrance system (identified as Option B), and the area without a pedestrian underpass (identified as Option C). These are intended to help better illustrate the impacts of the various approaches under consideration.

It should also be noted that the inclusion of the pedestrian underpass has somewhat complicated the design of storm and sanitary sewers along John Shields Parkway and into the future park. The sewers have been routed around the underpass ramps while also respecting space for the future construction of the John Shields Parkway Bridge over the Scioto River. Utilities along Riverside Drive realignment have had to be placed deeper (15+ feet) to stay clear of the footings for the tunnel or be routed 100 feet or more horizontally around the tunnel. All of these issues, however, can be successfully addressed and would be workable within the currently proposed plan.

One concern expressed at the November 2013 Planning Commission meeting was that the inclusion of the pedestrian underpass could create a significantly less vibrant street. Given its location and the likely surrounding uses, the Administration does not share the concern that the proposed underpass would create a significantly less lively or vibrant street. The most common example of street life that has been dampened by tunnel/skywalk facilities occurs as a function of the new bypass routes becoming a more convenient route for users (pulling pedestrians off of the street), and sometimes even providing climate-controlled environments. In this case, the proposed underpass access is, by necessity, a somewhat less convenient, longer circuitous route relative to the major destinations, and it provides minimal weather protection.

Based on 60% plans, the estimated cost of the underpass and entryway system (Option A) is $1,014,000, with the roadway underpass itself representing $401,000 of this cost, and the entryway system costing $613,000. This estimate does not include the ancillary costs to re-route storm, sanitary and DubLink facilities around the pedestrian underpass.

On a separate but related note, it is also important to acknowledge that there are no other pedestrian underpass facilities available anywhere along Riverside Drive within Dublin. Given the past issues and discussions related to the need to provide greater connectivity between the east and west sides of Dublin, the pedestrian underpass would reduce the divisive effects of Riverside Drive, at least at this one location. The proposed underpass represents the best likely alternative for such a separated pedestrian connection, if the pedestrian underpass connection is deemed desirable by the City.

PEDESTRIAN UNDERPASS OPTIONS

At this stage of plan development there are three likely scenarios, as depicted in the Attachment:

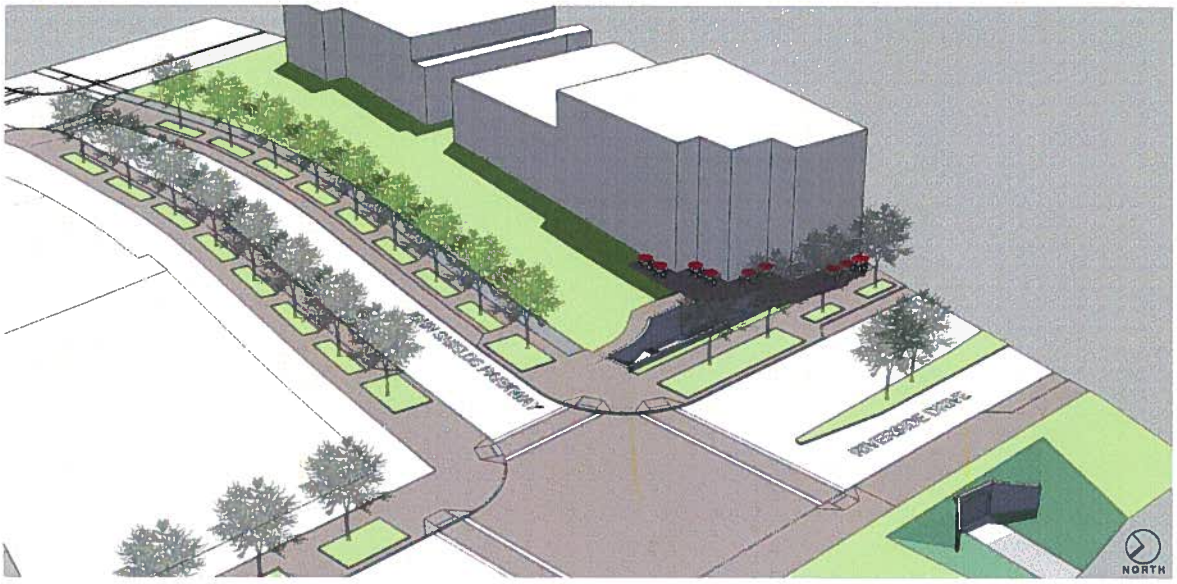
1. Option A which advances the underpass and entryway system as currently designed in the 60% submittal, with full accessibility compliance and extensive east side ramping systems;
2. Option B, which would advance the underpass but re-design the entryway system on the east side with a far less obtrusive entry system within the Greenway; or
3. Option C, which would remove the pedestrian underpass completely from the project.

However, it is important to emphasize that any delay in making a decision on the underpass will adversely affect the "construction begin" date, and therefore the overall project schedule. It is also important to note that it would not be practical to add a pedestrian underpass in the future after this project is complete.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the issues associated with the pedestrian underpass, the opportunities and obstacles presented at the proposed location, and the likely inability to provide any such underpass elsewhere along Riverside Drive, the Administration recommends that the City should proceed with proposed pedestrian underpass, by pursuing either Option A or B. It should be noted again that other such pedestrian underpasses in Dublin are not ADA accessibility compliant (with such ADA access being provided in the at-grade pedestrian crossing), so the elimination of the extensive ramping system (similar to what is as depicted in Option B of the Attachment) would be the Administration's preferred of the two recommended options.

Option A - Pedestrian Tunnel: Ramp Access



Option B - Pedestrian Tunnel: Stair Access

Option C: No Pedestrian Tunnel