

APPENDIX C

Development Community and Property Owner Interviews

Memorandum

To: DivisionConnects Steering Committee & Agency Team

From: Dana Rivera, Parametrix

RE: Summary of Completed Interviews

Date: 02/14/2022

Memo Purpose

This memo is a summary of the completed interviews and feedback from key property developers and stakeholders on the future implementation of bus rapid transit (BRT) and supporting infrastructure and its impact on land use and development in the Division Street corridor.

Interview Method Overview

15 key property developers and stakeholders were sent meeting invites via email, as well as contacted by phone. A total of four interviews were held via video conference with SRTC, STA, Spokane County, City of Spokane, and Parametrix staff. At each meeting, members of the DivisionConnects study team presented an overview of the DivisionConnects study's purpose, background, process, and preferred alternative for BRT.

Division BRT Improvements Summary

Overall, the BRT improvements were well received by those interviewed. Many participants saw the improvements as having a positive impact on the properties and development potential along the Division Street corridor and the surrounding neighborhoods. It was widely assumed that the businesses along Division Street were reliant on bus service. One respondent mentioned that the intersection of Division and Wellesley will be a future hot spot and will require a stop there. At Division and Wellesley, however, there was a consensus that pedestrian safety and accessibility were issues.

The opportunities that the BRT will bring to the corridor have widespread support. The business access and transit (BAT) lanes are a good option for improving traffic flow along Division. Those interviewed had no objections to buses as long as they did not obstruct vehicle travel.

Those interviewed saw the benefits of the BRT and agreed that it can be successful without impeding development. It was pointed out that existing access to transit as a pedestrian, cyclist, or park-and-ride user is extremely limited. Participants felt that there are no facilities to attract riders to the service. It was recognized that improved transit service can improve access to opportunities for people who rely on bus transportation.

Development Changes in The Next Ten Years

Although the BRT is a selling point for businesses, it is assumed among participants that retail along the corridor will change in the future. Non-retail services, according to some, will be added to the corridor in the future. Being on the bus line was mentioned as a benefit, though it may not influence the development decision.

Participants expressed concern about zoning and permitting along the corridor. A common theme was the desire for more mixed-use residential, as well as the possibility of high-density residential zoning. Many participants want more bike access, as well as better facilities and bike racks, which could lead to an increase in bike ridership. It was also mentioned that pedestrian and bike connections across and through the corridor would be beneficial.

Respondents want more entertainment options and alternative uses for the Northtown Mall area. Autonomous vehicles may influence transportation in the future. Even with the BRT, Division Street will remain a commuter street for drivers. It was mentioned that residential development is a possibility but not desired right off Division Street, perhaps a block in from Division would be more appropriate. It was mentioned that land cost along Division is high for residential. It was also suggested that parking requirements be reduced or eliminated, as they increase development costs and incentivize driving.

Concerns

The outside lane option raises some concerns. The interior lane option may be preferred by businesses because it provides greater accessibility. There is also a concern that retail along Division will dry up with regional driving trips moving to the North Spokane Corridor, causing traffic to divert north to new retail development planned for the area. It was stated that the NSC highway will not benefit Division in terms of retail. Ridership using transit for non-retail purposes was raised as a source of concern. If people believe that too many buses will slow traffic, they will avoid Division. This would influence retail along the corridor.

One interviewee was concerned that the buses would be a detriment to Spokane's reputation as a car-centric city. There was also concern expressed about funds being spent on perceived diminishing returns, and the buses' noise level was questioned. One interviewee noted that buses are associated with a lower-income demographic.

DivisionConnects Summary of Completed Interviews

Division BRT improvements

- Overall, the developers think that the Division BRT improvements are an overall benefit for properties and development potential along Division and the adjacent neighborhoods.
- Businesses depend on bus activity.
- Division and Wellesley are going to be a future hot spot and need a stop at that location.
- The overall perception that pedestrian safety and accessibility is a concern at Division and Wellesley.
- The idea of BAT lanes is a good option for traffic flow along Division, no problems with buses as long as it doesn't impede vehicular travel.
- How much money should be spent on diminishing returns? Are the buses going to be noisy?
- Buses might be a negative. Spokane is perceived as a car-centric town.
- Buses are associated with a lower income/demographic.
- BRT can be successful without impacting development.
- Right now, the ability to access transit, as a pedestrian, cyclist, or park-and-ride user is very limited, as the facilities are not present to get riders to the service.
- Enhanced transit service can improve access to opportunities for people who depend on transit

Development changes in the next ten years

- The common perception that there will be changes in retail along the corridor.
- Being on the bus line is an advantage, although it might not influence the decision to develop.
- BRT is a selling point for businesses.
- Zoning, permitting, and land values along the corridor are a concern, more so than whether bus service is there or not.
- Foresee non-retail services (office, medical) coming to the corridor in the future.
- More residential is desired with mixed-use and the opportunity for high-density residential zoning.
- Would like to see more biking access and improved facilities and bike racks, which may drive bike ridership.
- Additional pedestrian and bike connections across and through the corridor.
- Would like to see more entertainment venues and alternative uses for the Northtown Mall area.
- Autonomous vehicles may become a component of travel in the future.
- Division Street will always have traffic – it will always be a commuter street.
- Residential may take place but not desired right off Division Street, maybe a block in from Division, adjacency to Division is seen as a barrier. Land cost on Division is high for residential.

- Minimize/eliminate requirements for parking, as this adds to development costs and incentivizes driving.

Concerns

- There is a concern about the outside lane option. The interior lane option might be preferred because it provides more accessibility for businesses. (Clarified that center-running was not the locally preferred alternative).
- Concern that retail will dry up along Division and traffic will just go north to new retail development slated to take place. (Traffic will leave Division for the NSC and Kaiser development will be a draw)
- Retail along Division will change. The highway will not help Division in a retail way.
- A concern for ridership using transit for non-retail purposes.
- Too many buses will detract people from Division if they believe buses will slow traffic. This would subsequently impact retail along the corridor.

DivisionConnects Summary of Outreach Efforts

Documentation of efforts to reach developers who didn't respond/participate

Comments from Emails Sent

Interviews for the week of December 20-24, 2021

- Emails sent to all contacts December 17, 2021
- Interviews scheduled for Chud Wendle (Hutton Settlement) and Daryl Rheingans (Northtown Mall).

Interviews for the week of January 10-14, 2022

- Emails sent to all contacts January 6, 2022
- Interviews scheduled for Dave Black (NAI Black) and Matthew Collins (Uptic Studios)

Phone calls placed to non-responders from initial emails

Interviews for the week of January 24-28, 2022

Riverside Apartments

Designer: GGLO Architects

Point of Contact: Mitch Yockey – Myockey@GGLO.com – (206) 261-5285 (cell)

Left Message 1/24 10a

Millennium Apartments

Designer: Bernardo Wills Architects

Point of Contact: Mike Stanicar – mstanicar@bwarch.com – (509) 838-4511

Left Message 1/24 10a

Spokane Public Facilities District

Point of Contact: Stephanie Curran – scurran@spokanepfd.org – (509) 279-7000

Left Message 1/24 10a

Jordan Tampien, 4 Degrees Real Estate Jordan@4degrees.com – (509) 499-2231

Left Message 1/24 10a

Barry Baker, Baker Construction & Development bbaker@bakerconstruct.com – (509) 535-3668