

JENNIFER GALLAGHER

Director

May 21, 2021

**Subject: Response to Comments and Project Update**  
**Re: SR 161 at Karl Rd. Intersection Improvement Project (FRA-161-12.04, PID 110436)**

Dear Interested Party,

The City of Columbus, in coordination with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), conducted a virtual stakeholder meeting and a virtual public open house in August/September 2020 to present two alternatives to improve the intersection of State Route 161 and Karl Road and North Service Road Intersection. The two alternatives presented were: Alternative 1 - installation of a roundabout aligned with the southern driveway of the shopping plaza on the east side of Karl Road and Alternative 2 - installation of a roundabout aligned with the northern driveway of the shopping plaza on the east side of Karl Road.

Many comments received during the virtual stakeholder and public open house were related to property impacts, community education on how to use a roundabout, and aesthetics/design elements. The project team has reviewed the comments from the public and project stakeholders. Questions, comments, & concerns and the project teams responses have been compiled into a table and included in this letter.

Alternative 2 was the project team's Recommended Alternative at the time of public involvement. Considering public and stakeholder feedback, the City and ODOT have selected Alternative 2 as the Preferred Alternative. Although Alternative 2 was selected as the Preferred Alternative, the original design was modified to minimize impacts based on the concerns received from the public involvement process. The new modified alternative takes the design from Alternative 2 and shifts the roundabout 30' south. Shifting the roundabout south minimizes impacts to nearby residential properties and drives. The new design also impacts fewer parking spaces at the nearby shopping center. This modified Preferred Alternative for the FRA-161-12.04 (PID 110436) is identified as Alternative 2A.

The attached handout shows the updated design (Alternative 2A) compared to the old design (Alternative 2). Safety improvements include the construction of a mini-roundabout to allow U-turns, a concrete median, upgrading the signal at State Route 161 and Karl Road, and drainage upgrades.

**Additional Project Updates:** Construction is expected to begin April 2023 and last approximately 6 months. A full closure of the road in the construction area is expected, and local detour routes will be provided. The detour will take drivers headed northbound on Karl Road to SR 161, to Sharon Wood Boulevard, to Alpine Road, and back to Karl Road. Drivers headed south on Karl Road will be rerouted to Alpine Road, to Sharon Wood Boulevard, to SR 161, and back to Karl Road. COTA bus stop locations will be closed and/or temporarily relocated. Pedestrian access will be maintained where existing sidewalks are present with detours provided to route pedestrian traffic around the construction zone. If right-of-way acquisition is necessary from your property, personnel with the City of Columbus Real Estate Office will contact you directly at a later date, to discuss the right-of-way needs, the acquisition process, and your rights under that process.

*Information continues on next page →*

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by ODOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 14, 2020, and executed by FHWA and ODOT.

Additional project materials and information may be requested from myself or can be viewed on ODOT's public input website at: <https://publicinput.com/161Karl>

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me by phone at 614-645-3006, or by email at [acfedak@columbus.gov](mailto:acfedak@columbus.gov).

Sincerely,



Angela Fedak  
CIP Project Manager

<b>FRA-161-12.04 (PID 110436) – SR 161 at Karl Rd. Public &amp; Stakeholder Comments and Responses</b>	
<b>Comment</b>	<b>Response</b>
New lighting on Maple Canyon was recently installed after years of lobbying. Please don't send us backward on this. Many of our drivers are New Americans who are learning to drive in America and have language barriers. I live near 161 and Strawberry Farms Blvd., which has a non-standard intersection that was designed for safety. It's clearly marked, but 6 years after the change people don't understand because it's not typical. They still try to turn where they aren't supposed to. We need overhead signs, post signs AND roadway lane markings. We need educational videos in multiple languages to send around to neighbors.	Lighting is proposed on all side roads as part of the project. Any lighting impacted will be relocated to accommodate the proposed layout. The appropriate signage and pavement markings will be implemented on this project and we are currently working with our traffic management team as to what marking and signage is recommended. As we near construction, an educational flyer for local residents will be distributed that will explain how to navigate through these roundabouts. These will be made available in multiple languages.
Given the number of New Americans in the Northland area, it would be appropriate to use universal (pictorial) signage to make sure the roundabout directions are clear to a maximum number of people.	Based on experience in other communities, pictorial signage has been most successful. The roundabout will be clearly signed in advance to alert drivers of what is expected of them. As we near the start of construction, we will provide an educational flyer for local residents that will explain how to navigate through these roundabouts.

<p>We want to make sure the bus platforms have shelters included. This area is economically disadvantaged and it has been exacerbated by poor bus service and zero facilities for the bus stops we recently gained.</p> <p>Also we are concerned with making sure all of the GPS and navigation routing are updated immediately to direct people correctly through the roundabout and back.</p> <p>We would like new construction projects to have sidewalks integrated with the new configuration.</p>	<p>The project team will relay the request to COTA, as they are the responsible entity for constructing the bus shelters along this corridor.. From our conversations with COTA about this request, they are currently investigating the placement of shelters along SR 161 corridor. They have requested to ensure a clean implementation of shelters if they are determined they are needed, that an area of 5’x18’ be clear of any conflicts so that in the future COTA will be able to install these shelters.</p> <p>GPS navigation is not managed by the City or ODOT. In most cases shortly after the roundabout is installed GPS maps are updated by third party companies.</p> <p>Sidewalks will be reconstructed on both sides of the side roads. In addition a shared-use path is planned along the north &amp; south side of SR 161.</p>
<p>The main concern is maintaining access to dumpster on the north side of the building and any loss of parking spots on the property.</p> <p>Also, concerned about the disruption of his businesses in this plaza during construction and would like a field meeting to discuss the parking lot and the proposed improvements.</p>	<p>The project team is investigating these concerns and will follow-up with individually with the property owner.</p>
<p>We own the property at 5952 Karl Road and residents at this home are and will continue to be people with developmental disabilities, including ambulation disadvantages. The proposed Alternate 2 has direct and adverse impact on our property and its disabled residents, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The taking of land for the roundabout eliminates significant loading and unloading area, as often the residents use wheelchair accessible transportation vans and the area beyond the building line is used for off-street parking.</li> <li>2. The new headlight pattern on the home may also be disruptive to residents who may have challenges related to lighting/patterns of lights and trigger something.</li> <li>3. The added engine noise impact of vehicles starting their acceleration out of the roundabout may also be detrimental to the residents.</li> <li>4. The proximity of traffic with inbound motion towards the home creates a new level of threat to the safety of both residents and property.</li> <li>5. Ingress and egress from the driveway is also impacted, as vehicles in motion through roundabouts do not anticipate a vehicle</li> </ol>	<p>The project team is investigating these concerns and will follow-up with individually with the property owner.</p>

<p>backing out into the circle OR having slow and maneuver to make an acute turn into a driveway.</p> <p>Although the roadway improvement design may work for the area in general, it renders our home unsafe for our use. I would really appreciate a conversation outside of the stakeholder meeting.</p>	
<p>Until the stakeholder meeting, the significance of the mini-round as a U-turn feature than a more traditional roundabout through function hadn't sunk in. Do your traffic studies show impact of possible traffic back-ups on Karl Road northbound at the mini-round?</p> <p>Also, in addition to the concerns in earlier emails, I also fear the impact on rentability and how many folks will want/choose to live at the location as designed.</p>	<p>A comprehensive traffic analysis was performed for this project. The results indicate that the roundabout and center median will improve operations with minimal back-ups.</p> <p>The project team will follow-up with the property owner about these specific concerns.</p>
<p>I am worried that the new median will provide a larger space for solicitors to stand and ask for money.</p>	<p>The median barrier near SR 161 will be a minimum of 4' wide vary in width up to the proposed roundabout, this will also provide additional safety for pedestrians crossing the road by providing a refuge area. We can consider a taller median to prohibit these actions in the design, however this may disturb sight lines for drivers. We will also consider additional design details such as planters or other design elements that may deter panhandlers from soliciting at the intersection. This will be investigated as the project moves forward into the design process.</p>
<p>I'm concerned vehicles will pass over the median.</p>	<p>The median separating northbound and southbound traffic coming in and out of the roundabout will be 6" tall. This should be sufficient in deterring vehicles from crossing the median.</p>
<p>How will signage portray usage of roundabout as a U turn? Lots of people in the area are new Americans and may not understand how to use the roundabout.</p>	<p>We plan to send out an information flyer to the surrounding public that will provide educational videos and pictures of how to navigate through these mini roundabouts. They will also be available on the City of Columbus project website.</p>
<p>What about the usage of stamped concrete for the roundabout?</p>	<p>We still have not determined the material for the inner circle of the roundabout. We are exploring different options for materials in the project design process.</p>
<p>Will the traffic signals be the type that hang down or can we put in mast heads?</p>	<p>The proposed design for the intersection currently is a strain pole design, or the hanging street signals. Recently the City has update the design standards and the only area we allow new mast arms to be installed in with the downtown limits.</p>

<p>I'm concerned about the selection of the roundabout and that people will not follow the roadway instructions.</p>	<p>The roundabout option was selected in a previous SR 161 corridor study as the recommended alternative to address safety concerns along SR 161 and parallel service roads. Although no design is exempt from accidents, roundabouts are a FHWA proven safety countermeasure. Based on our traffic analysis, a roundabout will improve safety for the intersection and improve the level of service in the corridor.</p>
<p>What outreach is being done with surrounding businesses in the area right now?</p>	<p>The stakeholder meeting was the first step in reaching out to the surrounding businesses in the area. There will be additional outreach throughout the project development process, such as the upcoming public outreach mailer. Businesses will be included as part of the notification. The comment period for the project allows business owners and other stakeholders to reach out to the project team and discuss any concerns and questions they may have. We also have a webpage that businesses, stakeholders, and members of the public can access to learn about the project and leave questions and comments at any time. Angela Fedak's contact information is also available on this site and printed on notification materials to submit comments and concerns.</p>
<p>What has the process for selecting the median barrier aesthetics? Is there anything we can do to help facilitate a more aesthetically pleasing median barrier?</p>	<p>We are currently evaluating different aesthetic options for the median barriers. Gathering public input is the first step to help inform decision-making for certain design elements. We will continue to engage with the community to gather information about what they would like to see aesthetically.</p>
<p>Will street lighting be revised as part of this project?</p>	<p>There will be additional streetlights and streetlight upgrades to help illuminate the roundabouts and areas along the corridor. As well as upgrades to the existing lighting along the SR 161 corridor.</p>
<p>Please engage the 161 Task Force if there are impacts to the flower boxes along the north and south side of State Route 161. These were purchased as part of the cleanup and beautification effort in the area.</p>	<p>We have made note of this and will work with the Task Force if the flower boxes will be impacted.</p>
<p>Has there been a discussion around continuous bus routes as part of this project?</p>	<p>Unfortunately, new bus routes are out of the scope of the project and are typically handled by the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA). However, the project team has been coordinating with COTA to minimize impacts to the bus routes in the project area and will continue to do so throughout the project development process.</p>
<p>I'm worried some businesses around the roundabout will not be able to get their semi-trucks in and out of their drive.</p>	<p>Further along in the project development process, we will be working with the nearby business owners to discuss the project and create turning templates for any areas of concern. This will help to ensure proper access to the surrounding businesses.</p>
<p>I'm worried that the median will be used as a dumping ground for debris. Who will maintain the roundabout?</p>	<p>The medians in the center of the roundabout will be raised, so trash is unlikely to gather in the middle of the roundabout. Maintenance will continue to be handled as it is now with street sweeping and other cleaning methods.</p>