

JENNIFER GALLAGHER

Director

November 16, 2023

Subject: Response to Comments and Project Update
Re: State Route 161 Corridor Improvements – Phase 2 (Ambleside to Maple Canyon)
FRA-161-11.73 Ambleside, ODOT Project ID 115797

Dear Interested Party,

The City of Columbus, in coordination with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), conducted an open house stakeholder meeting on Thursday, June 29, to present proposed improvements to State Route (S.R.) 161 and adjacent service roads. The project is the second phase of a series of projects that will make improvements to the S.R. 161 corridor, including a 10-foot shared-use path, safety improvements on the side streets and at the service road intersections. The purpose of this project is to improve safety, access management, and traffic operations.

Improvements presented at the meeting include:

- Replace the existing traffic signals at the intersections of S.R. 161 and Tamarack/Sharon Woods Boulevard and Beechcroft Road
- Construct a shared-use path on the north and south side of S.R. 161 between Ambleside Drive and Maple Canyon Avenue
- Improve side streets along Tamarack/Sharon Woods Boulevard and Beechcroft Road
 - Install compact urban roundabouts
 - Reconstruct, widen, and resurface pavement
 - Replace or install new sidewalk
 - Construct a raised median between S.R. 161 and the roundabouts, including through the service road intersections
- Curb, curb ramps, street lighting, and storm sewer improvements throughout the project corridor

Many comments received during the open house were related to property impacts, questions regarding the shared-use path and other pedestrian improvements, landscaping and aesthetics, and safety concerns. The project team has reviewed the comments from the project stakeholders. Questions, comments, and concerns and the project team's responses have been compiled into a table and included in this letter.

Construction is expected to begin summer 2026 and last approximately 17 months. Residents and the public will be notified of detour information once known. COTA bus stop locations may be closed and/or temporarily relocated. Pedestrian access will be maintained where existing sidewalks are present, with detours provided to safely route pedestrian traffic around the construction zones. If right-of-way acquisition is necessary from your property, 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.

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 me or can be viewed on ODOT's public input website at: www.publicinput.com/161ambleside


If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me by phone at 614-645-2923, or by email at TMElchert@columbus.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tiffany Elchert". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "T".

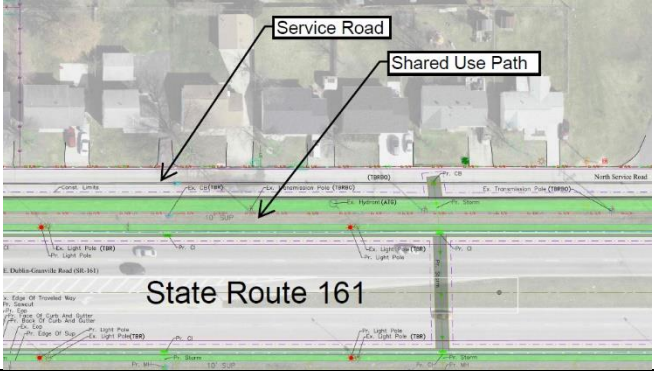
Tiffany Elchert, P.E.
Project Manager

**State Route 161 Corridor Improvements – Phase 2 (Ambleside to Maple Canyon)
Stakeholder Comments and Responses**

| Topic/Theme | Comment | Response |
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| Pedestrian Improvements | I really like the proposed sidewalks. | Thank you for your comment. |
| | What is a "Shared-Use Path"? Is that a roadway? | <p>A shared-use path (also called an SUP or multi-use path) is typically wider than a sidewalk and used by cyclists, scooters, and pedestrians. A shared-use path is not for vehicular use. It is typically located parallel to a roadway. An example of a shared use path in the City of Columbus is along the north side of Henderson Road (shown below to the right of the roadway).</p>  |
| | I would like to see lots of signage and markings on pedestrian crosswalks. | Pedestrian crossings will be marked with high visibility pavement markings and signage that is in accordance with the City of Columbus design standards. |
| | There are lots of seniors on Beechcroft Road – Sharon Woods Senior Village and Jaycee Village Senior Apartments | This has been noted by the project team. The pedestrian improvements proposed for the project include continuous sidewalks along Beechcroft, crosswalks, and shared-use path along 161 that will make it easier for users of all ages to navigate around the project area. |
| | There should be safe spaces for accessing buses (shelters, cement pads, etc.) | 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 previous conversations with COTA, they are investigating the placement of shelters along SR 161 corridor. |

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| Pedestrian Improvements | Are we doing LPIs? Or an "All walk"? | Per the Vision Zero Columbus Action Plan, design guidance for Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPIs) is being created, and S.R. 161 may be evaluated for consideration. An "all walk" is typically utilized at intersections with a high volume of pedestrian traffic in a dense, urban area which is not characteristic of the intersections along S.R. 161. |
| | Please incorporate a connection to Alum Creek Trail using the shared use path on 161. | This project will build the shared-use path along S.R. 161 between Ambleside Drive and Maple Canyon Avenue. Once separate funding is available, a separate project will extend the SUP east along S.R. 161 to connect with the Alum Creek Trail. |
| Landscaping and Aesthetics | Preserve the landscape boxes on some of the corners of the intersections. They were put in by residents/community groups decades ago, and folks really care about them. If you are going to remove them, please replace them with something comparable. | This project will not install landscaping. Currently, most of the grass area in the public right of way at the intersections and along SR 161 is needed to meet stormwater maintenance requirements. The city will further evaluate a space that potentially may be used for landscaping. If public right-of-way space is determined to be useable, Civic Associations will be required to enter into maintenance agreement with the city to plant and maintain landscaping within that space. |
| | The enhanced green spaces will improve overall appearance of the 161 corridor. | Thank you for your comment. |
| | I would encourage the incorporation of trees on the corridor both for aesthetics and the enhancement of the urban tree canopy in our neighborhood. | Thank you for your comment. |
| | Can some sort of strategy (fence, large shrubs) be placed in the medians to prevent panhandlers and pedestrians trying to cross mid-block? | Thank you for your comment. During design we will evaluate landscape features to prevent illegal mid-block pedestrian crossings. Fencing will not be installed with this project. |
| | Don't design to make conducive to solicitors (its bad on Karl, Maple Canyon, Cleveland Avenue). | This has been noted by the project team. |
| Stakeholder Engagement | Schedule time for presentation at Area Civic Association/Northland Community Council. | All area civic associations and Northland Community Council representatives were invited to the stakeholder open house. We are relying on these stakeholder representatives to share information with their respective groups. |
| | Please put easier to read maps on your website. | We appreciate this feedback. Updated maps and exhibits have been posted to the project website since the stakeholder open house was held on June 29. |

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| Stakeholder Engagement | You did not listen to us last time. Why would you listen this time. Wait to see what kind of results you have on Maple Canyon. | We value community feedback and have made changes in the past based on public comments. Our focus is on safety and community benefit, and we believe the Maple Canyon project aligns with these goals. We're committed to listening and continually improving our plans. We are monitoring driver behaviors and making minor modifications to ensure safety at the recently constructed roundabouts. |
| Construction and Maintenance of Traffic | Do not close the streets next to each other. | Construction phasing of the side street improvements will be developed to maintain access to all adjacent properties. |
| | I'm concerned about businesses being impacted negatively by closures. Some businesses have shut down or lost business (Rallys - Karl Road, and pizza shop (Angelos) at maple canyon, CVS, and Walgreens). | We understand the impact on local businesses is a critical consideration. While improvements are essential for safety and community benefit, we are committed to working closely with affected businesses to minimize disruptions and support their operations during construction. Our aim is to strike a balance between progress and the well-being of our local business community. |
| Safety | Reduce speed on 161 (50 mph is ridiculous!) I suggest 35-40. | In Ohio, the setting of speed limits is governed by Ohio Revised Code. As such, municipalities are somewhat limited in setting speed limits, especially in reducing speed limits. That being said, Columbus is committed to protecting lives on our city transportation system through Vision Zero Columbus. Reducing the speed limit in Downtown Columbus as part of our Action Plan 1.0 was just a beginning. As we move forward, Traffic Management staff is working within the latest ODOT guidelines to pursue speed limit reduction on additional streets throughout the city. We are cataloging these locations to be systematically reviewed, with areas of high pedestrian activity prioritized. SR 161/ Dublin-Granville Road has been added to the catalog. In the meantime, we remain committed to safety through design features of this project including the addition of shared use path for pedestrians and cyclists. |
| | Will there be curbs on the service road between Ambleside and Karl on the north side of 161? | Curb will be added to the south side of the service road between Ambleside and Maple Canyon on the north side of SR 161. |
| | I thought the residents voted against the installation of a roundabout? | Community members and stakeholders are given the opportunity to voice concerns and/or support during public involvement. A formal vote is not considered part of the public involvement process. |

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| <p>Safety</p> | <p>I truly question the advantage to safety and traffic flow from the roundabouts.</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. Roundabouts are an FHWA proven safety countermeasure that, compared to other intersection types, reduce fatal crashes by more than 90%, injuries by 75%, and all crashes by 35%. Head-on and high-speed right-angle crashes are virtually eliminated with roundabouts.</p> |
| | <p>My main concern is how the Columbus City School buses maneuver these roundabouts.</p> | <p>The design of the roundabout will allow for turning movements to be completed by larger vehicles such as school buses. Large vehicles may drive on the edge of the roundabout's center island if necessary.</p> |
| <p>Property Impacts</p> | <p>Will there be any encroachment on property lines (our front yards) for the houses on the service road on the north side of 161 between Ambleside and Karl?</p> | <p>No property impacts are expected on the homes along the service road on the north side of 161 between Ambleside and Karl.</p> |
| | <p>Will the shared path between Ambleside and Karl be between 161 and the service road or between the service road and the property lines (our front yards) on the north side of 161?</p> | <p>The shared-use path will be located between SR 161 and the adjacent service road. This is shown in the image below.</p>  |
| | <p>Will there be sewer updates/changes for the houses on the service road on the north side of 161 between Ambleside and Karl?</p> | <p>Sewer updates for the homes north of the service road between Ambleside and Karl are not included as part of this project.</p> |
| | <p>What is the expected impact on property taxes for the houses on the service road on the north side of 161 between Ambleside and Karl?</p> | <p>The construction of the shared-use path near these homes is not expected to directly impact property taxes for houses on the service road. Property taxes depend on factors like property value and local tax rates. The shared-use path can enhance property values over time by improving community amenities and accessibility. However, property tax assessments are determined by local policies and may change annually. For precise information about property taxes in your area, please contact the Franklin County Auditor's Office.</p> |