

City of Eagle, ITD, ACHD and East End Marketplace representatives discuss possible SH-44/Edgewood Lane intersection reconfiguration, signalization of northbound right turn lane

By Jeff Kunz, City Council President

EAGLE – Recently, City of Eagle, Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), Ada County Highway District (ACHD) and East End Marketplace representatives discussed the proposed reconfiguration of the State Highway 44 (SH-44)/Edgewood Lane intersection and the proposed signalization of the northbound right turn lane (from westbound SH-44 onto Edgewood Lane). City officials expressed concerns about how the proposed changes would impact the community including, but not limited to, travel demand/time, traffic flow, stacking and safety.

ITD District 3 Development Services Manager Jim Morrison reported that over 300 vehicles currently use the northbound free right turn lane during peak hours and that its signalization could slow down traffic entering the downtown area. He asked city officials whether they would be willing to give up that amount of downtown traffic.

Mayor Stan Ridgeway asked when the proposed changes would occur. Morrison indicated signalization of the northbound right turn lane would occur during development of the East End Marketplace. Excluding the proposed right-in only access points along SH-44 and Edgewood Lane into the East End Marketplace, the other improvements could occur later.

Council President Jeff Kunz observed that the proposed changes could also affect travelers to and from subdivisions along Edgewood Lane, Hill Road and Floating Feather Road.

According to a memo published by Planner III Nichol Baird Spencer, the request to change the northbound right turn lane was initiated by the East End Marketplace developer, who stated a right-in only access on Edgewood Lane (approximately 200-feet north of the intersection) is necessary to secure a grocery tenant for the site. The site currently has access from State Street (approximately 525-feet north of the SH-44 intersection) as well as a proposed right-in only access on westbound SH-44 (approximately 650-feet east of the Edgewood Lane intersection) that is currently under review by ITD. The proposed right-in only access on Edgewood Lane was removed from the original site plan at ACHD's request, is currently under review by ACHD and could be re-introduced through an amendment to the site plan.

John Rennison, an engineering consultant for the East End Marketplace, said that signalizing the northbound right turn lane would mitigate an unsafe condition with drivers turning left onto Edgewood Lane (from eastbound SH-44) and merging right into the East End Marketplace via the proposed right-in only access on Edgewood Lane. If the proposed right-in only access on Edgewood Lane is approved, city officials requested that ACHD and the developer explore providing an ingress lane as an additional mitigation measure.

The northbound right turn lane is approximately 400-feet in length. Dan Thompson, of Thompson Engineers, estimated that if the northbound right turn lane is signalized, a 95 percent average queue length of less than 350-feet during the PM peak hours would occur, meaning that 95 percent of the time, the queue length at the right turn lane would not extend beyond the storage capacity. Additionally, he estimated that drivers making the northbound right turn from SH-44 onto Edgewood Lane (under signalized control) would incur an average delay of 27 seconds per vehicle. A recent traffic study conducted by Thompson Engineers concluded that elimination of the free right turn from westbound SH-44 at Edgewood Lane would not have a significant negative impact on the transportation system and that elimination of the right turn lane would allow for construction of a second eastbound left turn lane when required (by the year 2035).

After extensive discussion, city officials requested that the Eagle Transportation Committee review the proposed changes and provide their recommendations. Ultimately, the Eagle Transportation Committee recommended unanimously that the SH-44/Edgewood Lane intersection should be reconfigured to remove the northbound free right turn lane and that, once fully reconfigured, all efforts should be made to maximize the green time of the northbound right turn lane when there are no conflicting movements.

In correspondence dated October 29, 2015, an ACHD representative wrote that removal of the northbound free right turn lane may require modifications to the entire intersection, not just the eastern leg, and requested confirmation that ITD would support and allow the intersection to be modified to serve the East End Marketplace. City officials requested that ITD and ACHD work together on a transportation solution that would not delay the commercial development project.

These topics will be on the agenda for the February 23, 2016 council meeting. The public will be able to comment on these topics prior to conclusion of the meeting. (The second public comment session at the end of the meeting is reserved for the public to share their concerns or comments regarding subjects on the agenda.)

