Meridian Street Roundabouts Feasibility Study
Intersections at Birchwood & Squalicum (ES-0550)

Public Open House
June 24, 2019
Significant Change Over Time

Major Land Use-Transportation Milestones

• Lummi, Nooksack, & ancestors
• Roeder Mill, Whatcom Creek, 1851
• Guide-Meridian wood plank road, 1894
• Consolidation of four towns into modern Bellingham, 1904
• Construction of Interstate 5, 1960’s
• Construction of St. Joseph Hospital, 1970’s
• Construction of Bellis Fair Mall, 1980’s
• Closure of Georgia-Pacific Mill, 2001
• Waterfront Redevelopment, 2019+
How has this area changed over time?

1915 – Meridian / Country Club

1915 – Meridian / Future I-5
How has this area changed over time?

1915 – Meridian / Future Telegraph

1919 – Meridian / S. Cornwall Park
How has this area changed over time?

1963 Meridian - Northwest (No Mall)

1963 Meridian - James (No hospital)
How has this area changed over time?

1968 Farm Store Grand Opening

1970 Farm Store
How has this area changed over time?

1977 Squalicum Parkway

1980 Meridian (No Mall)
How has this area changed over time?

1997 Northwest - James

2008 Northwest - James
How has this area changed over time?

2013 Northwest - James

2016 Northwest - James
Since 1990, City + UGA population has grown by 65% from 60,000 to 99,000

- 25% of City limits added north of 1904 boundaries via annexation since 1980
  - 1990’s Predominantly commercial & industrial land
    - Generates sales tax revenue
    - Provides almost all local transportation funding (General & Street Funds, WTA Levy, Bham TBD)
  - 2000’s Predominantly residential land
    - Does not generate much tax revenue
    - Very expensive to provide urban services

- When UGA annexes, City inherits old, narrow, rural standard roads with no shoulders, no sidewalks, no bike lanes
  - Extremely expensive to retrofit rural roads to urban multimodal complete streets
Land Use Development

Existing Zoning Allows Significant Growth

~ 3,000+ homes in King Mtn Neighborhood

~ 1,000+ homes in Cordata Neighborhood

Several hundred thousand SF of commercial/industrial W. Bakerview/Cordata

Remaining vacant and under-developed land within map extent (east of Meridian) has an estimated capacity for 2,900 to 4,200 new housing units accommodating 5,700 to 8,200 residents and 1,440,000 sq ft of commercial and industrial development accommodating 1,900 to 3,100 new jobs.
King Mountain Neighborhood
- 1,000+ acres
- Annexed 2009
- Neighborhood Plan 2010-2011
- Zoning allows 3,000+ new homes
- Growing Fast
- Land constrained by natural features (Streams, wetlands, steep slopes, forested habitat)
- WTA GO Line
- Few sidewalks
- Few bike lanes
- Few crosswalks
- Few turn lanes
- Few traffic signals

City Transportation Plan Investments
- 2013-2016 James Street, Phase 1 ($8.35 million)
- 2019-2020 Orchard-Birchwood Multimodal Arterial ($12.15 million)
- 2019 James Street Study & Meridian Roundabouts Study ($250,000)
- 2021 Telegraph Road Multimodal Arterial ($5.8 million)
- 2023 Roundabout at James/Bakerview ($4.0 million)
- 2024+ James Street, Future Improvements ($8.0 to $10.0 million)

Total = $40+ million
Meridian Street Multimodal Roundabouts
Bellingham, WA
- Two closely spaced intersections at Squalicum & Birchwood
- Vehicle LOS “F” Signal Operations
- Merging of several arterial streets
- Designated freight truck route Waterfront Industrial > I-5 > Canada
- Orchard-Birchwood undercrossing of I-5 open in 2020; will impact these intersections significantly
- Constrained Right-of-Way; BNSF
- Crossings for people walking and biking on both streets and trails
- Feasibility Study to Determine Preferred Alternative(s) to Pursue
- RFQ - December 2018
- P.E. & Design (30%) in 2019
- ROW acquisition 2020+
- Construction possible 2021+ (Pending unknown grant funds)
- Opportunities for multiple grant funding sources to be combined Ex: STBG; TIB; WSDOT; Freight; Port; Ecology; Recreation; TIF; PIF; etc.
Existing and Future Traffic Volumes

2018 Traffic Volumes:
- Meridian: Birchwood to I-5 = 26,300 ADT
- Meridian: Squalicum to Illinois = 11,400 ADT
- Birchwood: Northwest to Meridian = 6,300 ADT
- Birchwood: Meridian to Squalicum = 6,600 ADT
- Squalicum: Roeder to Meridian = 5,300 ADT

Near Future Considerations:
- When Orchard – Birchwood Connector → is opened to public in 2020, traffic will increase on Birchwood, Meridian, James
- More development on Waterfront and in King Mountain Neighborhood will create more vehicle traffic
Public Works Plan for Short-Term (2017-2020) and Long-Term (2021+)

Connectivity of Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities between Cordata, Meridian, King Mtn, Cornwall Park, Barkley, & Irongate Neighborhoods

- Mobility Barriers
- Existing bicycle facilities 2014
- 2015 - 2017 bicycle improvements
- 2018 bicycle improvements
- Intersection improvements
- 2019 - 2020 improvements
- Intersection improvements (if funded)
- Future unfunded links
- Intersection improvements
Public Works Plan for
Short-Term (2017-2020) and
Long-Term (2021+)

Connectivity of Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities between Alderwood, Birchwood, & Columbia Neighborhoods
Environmental Issues, Challenges, & Opportunities Surrounding Intersections

Critical Areas & Natural Features
- Wetlands & Buffers
- Streams & Buffers
- Steep Slopes
- Forest & Habitat

Probable impacts to all of the above
- Mitigation sequencing documentation
- How to minimize impacts
- Alternatives analyzed
- Cost to mitigate unavoidable impacts

Preferred Alternative(s) Balances:
- Accommodating Planned Growth
- Multimodal Transportation Needs
- Environmental Protection
- Improvement Costs & Funding Capability
Recreational & Environmental Issues

- Cornwall Park abuts both intersections
- Vehicle entrance to Cornwall Park is 4th leg of Meridian/Squalicum intersection
- Possibility of removal/replacement with Birchwood vehicle entrance
- BNSF Railroad Right-of-Way thru middle of two intersections; Needed for Bay to Baker Trail connection to Squalicum Creek Trail
- Squalicum Creek and Tributary W both cross Meridian thru/near intersections
- Flood zone, wetlands
- Critical Areas impact and mitigation
- Salmon and riparian habitat restoration
- Feasibility Study to Determine Preferred Alternative(s) to Pursue
Bellingham Parks & Trails
Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan and Comprehensive Plan

• Cornwall Park
  • Abuts study area
  • East leg of Meridian/Squalicum intersection

• Missing Trail Link
  • Northwest - Meridian
  • BNSF Railroad right-of-way

• Squalicum Creek Trail
  • Orchard Place - Irongate Rd completed in 2017
Meridian Street Roundabout Feasibility Study

RFQ: The purpose of the Meridian Street Roundabout Feasibility Study is to:

1) Analyze alternatives for constructing ADA-compliant pedestrian, bicycle, and transit-supportive roundabout improvements on the Meridian Street corridor;

2) Identify preferred alternatives by arterial segment based on benefit-to-cost analysis;

3) Develop a preferred alternative to 30% preliminary design with cost estimates for construction;

4) Develop a financially feasible phasing plan for construction; and

5) Identify local, state, and federal funding options.
Public Outreach

Agencies Involved:
• Public Works Engineering, Operations, & Natural Resources
• Parks Department
• Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA)
• Port of Bellingham
• Reid Middleton Transportation Consultants
• Fehr & Peers Transportation Consultants

Project area mailer prepared (green shading) ➔

1,000 feet from project area = 2x minimum

1,089 notices mailed to residents, businesses, and property owners – June 6, 2019

Neighborhood Associations & MNAC representatives notified

June 24, 2019 public Open House
Abundant Life Church, 3220 Meridian Street
Public Open House – June 24, 2019

• Sign In Sheets
  • Contact information for keeping you informed as study progresses

• View Displays & Posters
  • Multi-layered, multi-faceted, complex problem to solve

• Ask questions of staff
  • City Public Works & Parks, Port, WTA

• Written Comment Sheets
  • Tell us what you think
  • Give to staff on your way out or mail/email in
Questions & Contact Information:

Chris Comeau, AICP-CTP, Transportation Planner
Bellingham Public Works Engineering
360.778.7946  ccomeau@cob.org