

## Appendix C

### GIRDWOOD COMMERCIAL AREA and TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLANS

#### SECOND SET OF PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

May 25-28, 1999

*The second set of public workshops, advisory committee meetings, and technical information sessions was held in Girdwood May 25 through May 28, 1999. The general purpose of the meetings was to review and get public feedback on alternative concepts for the commercial areas and the transportation master plans. In particular, discussion in most meetings focussed on the organization of the town center and possible alignments of a rail spur. Comments and questions from each of the week's meetings are summarized below.*

#### **SECOND PUBLIC MEETING, 5/25/99**

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##### **Responses to Transit Questions (Jim Charlier):**

- Aspen, Colorado has 1200 on-street parking spaces, many diagonal. Alleys are critical to service and delivery. Town is served by bus (Roaring Fork Transit – RAFTA). Has bus pull-outs on rural state highway, with first ever restricted bus lane in a rural area. Seems to be enough HOV traffic to justify loss of lane for general traffic during peak periods.
- Elevated guideways (monorails) work best in dense urban areas linking specific destinations. Very expensive. Don't work well where they're picking up people in lots of locations.
- Haven't built any personal rapid transit systems.
- Light rail is more human scale, track better integrated. Cars co-exist with pedestrians. Cost: \$15 million per mile, double with two tracks, in San Diego. Today, probably \$25-40 million per mile. Overhead catenary is source of power and, with power station, is the primary cost. This system would require a mode transfer, as heavy rail and light rail are not allowed on the same track.
- Rail diesel mobile units (Budd cars or Regio Sprinters) – standard gauge track. Can run on same track with heavy rail if strong enough (none are yet). None are alternative fuels.
- 15' corridor for single track without access road; 26' corridor for double track plus clear zone.
- Rail geometrics depend on speed and equipment.

##### **Intermodal Transit Center**

- Has to be accessible (cars, buses, bikes)
- Has to be on the rail line
- Has to be between DOT and Glacier Creek.
- Parking for 200-400 (or 600) cars.
- Building is key to convenience of the service: sheltered, level walk to bus, heated, control diesel fuel emissions. Lodging on upper floors to offset cost of transit facility?

##### **Commercial Areas – Comments and Questions:**

- Park is important to community. Prefer moving commercial on south side as far to the north as possible without impacting park.
- Like the idea of moving commercial up to the highway. Need off-site parking in the townsite, and traffic light at Hightower.
- How to avoid strip commercial feel on Hightower? (Charlier) Put parking behind buildings and implement good pedestrian system.
- Need to evaluate concepts for Hightower intersection – will it need a stop light? Median? Left-turn lane?

- Would like to see images of a well-done pedestrian underpass.
- What about a bypass? Take the middle section of the highway out entirely and move it south? (Where would the money come from to do this?) Make a one-way look around the core? (Better access, diagonal parking easier and more efficient, nice bucolic village green. Negative: park still in the middle of a highway. Hard for pedestrians to enter. How would you phase this?) Divert resort traffic out of the core?
- Want a park-like atmosphere in the New Townsite.
- Crow Creek Road needs attention. Needs to be a collector. Is a state road.
- Need to be sure golf course road doesn't encourage bypass speeding.
- Primary themes (TJM): small town atmosphere, traffic patterns that change from summer to winter, open space.
- Primary theme (GB): Creeks as the theme. Hightower as new main street seems most compatible with this theme. Use creeks as entries, as greenbelt trails. Rebuild a better dike along California Creek to the school. Big cottonwoods at Forest Fair are important.
- Is money available for water/sewer service to new townsite?
- Does GVDC want its commercial linked to the town center? (J Barnett: yes, although Carrs was more interested in community identify than Safeway may be.) Make the grocery of interest to visitors. (Charlier) Nervous about a strategy that segregates local from tourists commercial. Visitors want to experience the real place. JB: agrees that location and design of grocery is a critical decision. Need to develop design parameters, no big-box look.
- Green corridors along creeks – parking serves parks as well as commercial.
- Recreation Center - \$12 million. No. 4 in CIP, #2 priority in Girdwood Area Plan.
- Campground?
- Can we project population and retail demand?

## **TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING, 5/26/99**

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*The meeting was led by transportation consultant Jim Charlier, who showed examples of alternative transit systems used in other resort towns and discussed general concepts being considered.*

### **Public Transit**

- Future traffic levels – what will they be. Clarify and graph traffic counts – refer to existing studies. (Charlier) The projected levels of use will not be so high that big changes in infrastructure will be needed.
- Transit system should serve the entire valley so people can move around without a car. System needs to bring visitors into the valley, but also move people within the valley.
- The system should not have anything overhead (wires or elevated guideways).
- Analyze costs and benefits and how the system will be paid for.
- Buses can circulate more widely than rail.
- Is there any way Girdwood can cash in on Anchorage's People Mover system? (not thought to be feasible)
- How would these systems be funded? (Charlier) Colorado systems funded primarily through local sales tax. Federal funds for capital expenditures, not operations.
- People who use transit should help pay. Punch cards for commuters? Visitors pay?
- Start out modestly – preserve rights of way now, add more to the system later.
- Can Park 'n Ride work in Girdwood? For commuters to Anchorage, especially in bad weather? Yes. For Anchorage residents going to Girdwood? Doubtful. For skiers to Glacier-Winner Creek if it were to preclude access by automobile? Yes.
- Plan should provide for 4-600 parking spaces at the valley entry.
- On average, what percentage of operating costs is paid by riders? (Charlier) Public transit – 15% to 75% from fee box and passenger revenues; standard for smaller bus systems is about 25%.

- What are the most viable options for a town of 2000 like Girdwood? (Charlier) Hard to do high-frequency large vehicle service here. Need to keep route short to increase frequency. Best comparison might be with other northern towns with little sunlight in winter and significant elderly populations (e.g. Juneau).
- Don't reject light rail just because it's expensive or because it requires a mode transfer.
- Will there be access to the train in Anchorage? (Bruce Carr) Downtown, airport, Dimond Center, Potter Marsh, Northern Lights Blvd., Wasilla, Eagle River.
- What about high-tech all the way from Anchorage? Important to get people from Anchorage to Girdwood conveniently, but still need internal circulation within the valley.
- How much more commercial development will happen on Seward Highway? Need to emphasize the whole link.

### ***Rail Spur Concepts***

- Generally try to keep heavy rail out of the center of town (noise, safety, ability to stop) and out of residential areas.
- What if ARR is sold? Would it still be Federally subsidized?
- What will a ticket on the train cost? Cost to riders is important in determining who will use the system.
- Why do we have more detail about the rail system than we do the other alternatives? We should have equally detailed color maps and other information about the other alternatives.
- What population would rail serve? Would it reduce traffic?
- How would the trains turn around? (discussion of wyes, balloon tracks, other alternatives)
- Would Budd cars (diesel mobile units) run all the way from the airport? (They could.)
- Why show the ridiculous alternatives? It just gets people worked up.
- Could a monorail run on one of the other alignments? (It could.)
- We need to include noise impacts in the evaluation of alternatives.

#### ***Alt. 1A:***

- Will it conflict with future residential on Heritage Land Bank tract?
- Concerned with noise, avalanche.
- Runs across four trails.
- What will the cuts and forest clearing look like, especially from the train? From Mt. Alyeska?

#### ***Alt. 1B:***

- Town station still too far away from the New Townsite if it's on the west side of Crow Creek.

#### ***Alt. 2A:***

- Too close to houses. (How close is too close? Discussion of 200' easement, corridor construction width – 25' and up)
- Cuts across a bike trail to the school

#### ***Alt. 3:***

- Requires a mode change.
- Severe grade problems – may require a tunnel.

***Alt. 4:*** Would have to go under Alyeska Highway at Glacier Creek – aggravates road grade problem.

#### ***Alt. 5A:***

- Could this corridor stay on the west side of Glacier Creek and go past school? (yes).
- Too visible up the river channel.

Other comments on rail spur:

- 93 cruise ships will dock in Seward this summer. Takes 55 buses to move each shipload to Anchorage.
- Alts b, c, and d are not feasible in the valley. Similar in terms of station locations.
- The more flexible the system is, the better it will work.
- Rail corridor is +/- 25' wide. Typical easement is 100 to 200 feet wide. (Does ARR need a 100-foot ROW? No.) Track structure is 4'-8" wide plus 2-3 feet of rocks on each side, plus ditches.
- Rail based transit is not appropriate for inside Girdwood town center. Buses are easier to fit to the local environment – more flexible, easier to phase. Trains can't replace buses in the heart of town.

- OK if rail goes to hotel and you can't see, hear or smell it. (von Imhof response) Buses with transit center at hotel would be adequate for now, but wants to preserve a corridor for rail (Alt. 1A). May be a better alternative in the future than a second access road. (Starkey) If a corridor is preserved, plan it so it can be used for a mode other than rail. (Barnett) Afraid we'll base a multimodal system on buses, but that MOA won't commit to consistent service. In the short term, buses will be enough; in the long term, we should preserve a rail corridor, and the #1A alignment makes the most sense.
- More information wanted on the potential for a commuter train.
- Is a core area transit stop worth the trade-offs? Heavy trains don't belong in town. The group who identified a New Townsite stop wasn't thinking heavy rail. (Charlier) Light rail and monorail impacts (visual, infrastructure) are just as great; noises are different.
- No matter where the stations are, some people wouldn't use a rail system.

### ***Alyeska Highway***

- The boulevard treatment of the highway is a good idea, but would like to see it start to slow traffic from Seward Highway. The island at the Crow Creek intersection is also a good idea. (Snowplows will have problems.)
- The area behind Chair 5 could be even nicer (footbridge).
- Crosswalks needed at Hightower *and* Timberline – stamped, painted crosswalks?
- Be careful how Crow Creek Road is changed..
- Already hard to pick up a kid at Little Bears. Will we need a traffic signal?
- What about a new pedestrian underpass at Hightower?
- Curbs and gutters introduce the need for a storm drainage system – don't have one now. If we pinch the highway down, would we have to install urban drainage?
- Don't forget the Candle Factory and other businesses along the highway.

### ***Emergency Access – Second Valley Roadway***

- There is only one way in and out of the valley – especially over Glacier Creek. Need something on the east side.
- If an earthquake takes out one bridge, it could just as easily take out another.
- Any DOT plans for airport expansion? May affect the second road to the hotel (potential conflict with runway extension). An airport connector would take airport traffic out of the residential area.
- Community needs to assess potential risks and develop an emergency evacuation plan with temporary bridges.
- Potential new Chugach utility corridor on the east side.

### ***Arlberg Intersection at Alyeska Highway***

- Check utilities first – there are many in the road.
- Save the trees.

### ***Pedestrian Environment***

- What about Crow Creek Road? Question the need for a connector roadway between the townsite and Crow Creek Road – the area should be pedestrian friendly.
- Need path along Timberline.
- Need more underpasses and overpasses.
- Why not move Alyeska Highway out of the town core area?
- Temporary traffic calming devices is a good idea.

### ***Key Trails***

- Iditarod Trail – main pedestrian corridor.
- Trail needed between school and Crow Creek Road.
- Downtown to Crow Creek Road
- Connect Valley trails to regional trails, including into Anchorage.

### **Other Roadway Projects**

- Opportunity to use recycled asphalt in old townsite.
- Discussion of appropriation for a water main. To help the New Townsite, deal with utilities first.
- We need signs that are designed to be photogenic.
- There is no use for a Crow Creek – Arlberg connector.

### **Commercial Parking**

- Don't overlook the potential for covered parking.

## **ORIGINAL GIRDWOOD TOWNSITE MEETING (Commercial Areas Plan), 5/27/99**

*A special public meeting was held at the Forest Service HQ to bring together property owners and others particularly interested in the valley entry area and the Original Girdwood Townsite (OGTS). Comments of the group are summarized below:*

### **Goals in the Valley Entry area:**

- Increase commercial value
- Encourage mixed uses, with residential above studios
- Consider low income housing
- Make it a "walkabout" place
- Avoid strip commercial
- Develop a mutually beneficial relationship with transit

### **Existing conditions:**

- No natural gas on Dawson and east side – form a gas district?
- Culverts are full at high tide.
- No water service yet, but do have sewer service.
- Old townsite is more viable for commercial than the new townsite because of Seward Hwy.
- There won't be any more lots.

### **General Comments:**

- Move substation now, before second transformer is installed.
- Consolidate parking (where?)
- Need camper parking with services (laundry, showers, sewage disposal)
- DOT access road on northwest side isn't a legal access. No way now to make a left turn into it.
- Access to OGTS is poor.
- Main Street ROW is 60 feet wide.
- Best place for a hub (town center) is south New Townsite, not OGTS. It can build to attract the type of jobs that yield higher income and make people want to live here.
- Patent restrictions on lots prevent any streets south of highway.

### **Multimodal Transit Center:**

- Put transit center where parking can be screened and where rail and bus can interconnect. If transit center goes on the Mental Health Trust parcel, then need good pedestrian connections from OGTS.
- Functions that should be in the valley entry center: trailheads, rail and bus connections, parking and drop-off, passenger waiting, traveler services, information, State patrol office, RV parking, food service, showers.
- How much parking would be needed? (125 spaces = 1 acre)
- Number trains per day: 10-12 (1 coal, 2 freight ea. way from Whittier; 2 passenger ea. way from Seward and Whittier). Can rail line be relocated closer to highway?
- How big a problem is the DOT maintenance site?
- 2.5 million vehicles per year use the Seward Highway.

- Do we need a bus storage facility? If so, where?
- Parking supply here could be used for Forest Fair. Good alternative to airport parking in Anchorage (\$48/week).
- Get maximum benefit from cost-sharing with Alaska Railroad.
- Over 100 individual parcels in OGTS - +/- 20 owners, only a few live there year-round. Need to keep all informed.
- Cheaper, small family businesses belong in OGTS.
- What is the best relationship between multimodal center and parking?

Alternative sites for the multimodal transit facility:

**Alt 1: existing depot**

- Cons: access; no dedicated road; railroad crossing; adjacent to unsightly use (DOT)
- Pros: enough space, easier to screen parking, good visibility from highway, good trailhead access, works with railroad wye.

**Alt 2: Heritage Land Bank ¼-acre parcel**

- Cons: access from highway, railroad crossing, increased traffic on Main St., small size.
- Pros: easy to hide parking, good trail access, works with railroad wye, same side of highway as OGTS, better trail and bird-watching opportunities, reinstates main street.

**Alt 3: Mental Health Trust Parcel (northeast corner)**

- Cons: Problematic access by car, wetlands, hard to screen parking, as it would be on highway side of the depot.
- Pros: size, access to bike path, doesn't require pedestrian or car crossing of railroad track, easier to access OGTS via new intersection at Gold Ave.

**Mental Health Trust concerns:**

- Who would pay lease on MHT land?
- Will people be willing to pay for parking?
- What is the income-producing potential of the site? What revenue generating uses could happen here without competing with the New Townsite?

## **NEW TOWNSITE PROPERTY OWNERS MEETING, 5/27/99**

*A special meeting was held to bring together property owners and others particularly interested in commercial development in the New Townsite. Participant comments are summarized below:*

- Reasons why town square hasn't developed: lack of parking, lack of infrastructure, lack of visibility.
- Need work party to clear brush in park. Park along the highway doesn't seem people-friendly.
- Chip seal the square?
- Don't turn the creekside into private commercial property (especially around Lions Park).
- Highway will always be a separator.
- Site for church?
- Need to be and look like a small-town village.
- Issues: trying to localize the state highway and make a new route through the golf course. Still need to identify a reasonable set of interim improvements. Group wants to see a major relocation of the state highway.
- Main opportunity is a grocery store investor. Other retail wants to locate near them.
- Connection between north and south side can be made easier for cars, not just pedestrians.