

PRIORITIES FOR CROSSING I-96

MEMORANDUM



TO: WALKABLE NOVI COMMITTEE MEMBERS
FROM: ROB HAYES, P.E., DPS DIRECTOR/CITY ENGINEER *RH*
SUBJECT: NON-MOTORIZED CROSSING OF I-96 AT NOVI ROAD
DATE: JULY 12, 2012

In late March 2012, the Department of Public Services (DPS) staff presented City Council with the findings of a study titled, "*Pedestrian Route Study at Novi Road and I-96*". (Please refer to the engineering consultant's March 26 presentation slides located at this link: <N:\Everyone\Presentation4-NovRoadPedestrianRouteStudyoverI-96.pdf>). The overall purpose of the study was to determine the most feasible, safe and cost-effective non-motorized crossing of the freeway along or near Novi Road. The study discussed several potential options, but recommended Option 2B - an 8-foot wide pathway on the west side of Novi Road from just north of West Crescent Boulevard north to a new segment adjacent to South Karevich Drive (fka Sheraton Drive) that was recently constructed as part of the ongoing West Oaks II roadway rehabilitation project.

Because the Non-Motorized Master Plan identifies Novi Road as an "auto-focused" corridor, Council expressed legitimate concerns that this recommendation did not mesh with the recommendations listed in the City's Non-Motorized Plan, which prioritizes the top two non-motorized corridors, both with I-96 crossings, as:

1. Metro Connector Corridor (crossing I-96 on Meadowbrook Road).
2. Taft Road Corridor (crossing I-96 via the CSX underpass or a bridge over the freeway).

During FY11/12, the Metro Connector Corridor project was scoped and Phase I of the project (I-96 to 12 Mile Road) started. Phase I is currently being designed by DPS's Engineering Division in collaboration with MDOT and RCOC. The timing of the construction of this crossing is unknown because of the significant coordination and planning that must be done prior to MDOT's ultimate approval of the project.

The study found that a Taft Road Corridor crossing of I-96 is not feasible. Due to safety concerns, using the railroad underpass would not be permitted by CSX Transportation. In addition, the construction of a pedestrian bridge over the freeway would be cost prohibitive with an estimated cost of \$2.1 million – all of which would be borne by the City of Novi unless grant funding could be secured.

For these reasons and with the goal of getting a non-motorized I-96 crossing constructed in the near term, DPS decided to present the Novi Road corridor as a potential crossing point. The components of the Novi Road crossing would include:

- Construction of an 8-foot wide multi-use pathway in the right-of-way along the west side of Novi Road.

- Reconfiguration of the southbound Novi to Eastbound I-96 on-ramp to a 90°, signalized ramp.
- Installation of pedestrian crossing signals at two ramps (eastbound I-96 off-ramp and southbound Novi to westbound I-96 on-ramp).

The estimated cost range for this project would be \$775,000 to \$1.2 million.

Council expressed concerns about the safety of this proposed crossing, but investing in pedestrian signalization and reconfiguring the current free-flow eastbound on-ramp to a signalized 90° ramp would provide the maximum level of protection to non-motorized users available using current technology. Please note that the configuration of the I-696/Orchard Lake Road interchange in Farmington Hills is identical to the Novi Road interchange, and has an 8-foot wide pathway along the west side of Orchard Lake (see attached aerial photograph). However, this pathway **crosses an un-signalized/free-flow on-ramp**, and includes a signalized east-west crosswalk to allow the pathway to transition to the east side of the road. Although this pathway has existed for at least 20 years, **only one accident involving a non-motorized user has occurred**, according to Farmington Hills DPS staff (a pedestrian was hit and injured in the crosswalk of the westbound I-696 off-Ramp to Orchard Lake Road in 2002). This low frequency of accidents involving non-motorized users is especially significant since Orchard Lake Road's average daily traffic (ADT) at the I-696 interchange exceeds Novi Road's I-96 area ADT by over 3,000 vehicles per day.

Given this information, we would like to know if the Walkable Novi Committee feels that a Novi Road crossing of I-96 has merit; and if so, whether it should be a high priority crossing location for near-term construction.

I look forward to meeting with you on July 19 to discuss this matter further.

cc: Clay Pearson, City Manager
Victor Cardenas, Assistant City Manager
Barb McBeth, Planning Director
Charles Boulard, Community Development Director
Brian Coburn, P.E., Engineering Manager



I-696

Orchard Lake Rd

