



CITY OF BLACK DIAMOND

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Meeting Date: October 12, 2021
Staff Report Date: October 5, 2021
To: Planning Commissioners
From: Mona Davis, Community Development Director
Subject: Comprehensive Plan Amendments – SE Loop Connector Alternative

The purpose of this staff report is to go over final docket item #2021-02: “Amendments to comprehensive plan Appendix 7 (Transportation) to reflect an alternative SE loop connector route.”

A hearing was held on this docket item on August 10, 2021. Following public comments and the hearing, staff requested further information from the applicant including additional data and analysis on the proposed route that examines feasibility on all proposals and itemizes the issues and impacts for each route.

The following information comes from the August 10 staff report and has been revised based on the new information. Revisions to the staff report are underlined, so new information is clearly identifiable.

Proposal

This was a private request by Black Diamond Partners LLC, aka Oakpointe, to amend the text and map in the transportation appendix to include an alternative Southeast Loop Connector. The request for the alternative is an addition to the list of future road projects in Appendix 7 and none would be deleted.

The Comprehensive Plan currently identifies the SE Loop Connector as a connection between the Lawson Connector and State Route (SR) 169. In addition to the Lawson Street and the Lawson Connector, the SE Loop Connector was proposed to provide additional connectivity between the Lawson Hills MPD and SR 169. The SE Loop Connector Alternative, proposed to be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan, would connect the Lawson Hills MPD to Lawson Street, which then connects to SR 169. The Lawson Connector would remain.

Language would be added to include the Southeast Loop Connector Alternative on the list that provides the planned classifications by roadway as follows (in red):

Collectors

- Annexation Road*
- Southeast Loop Connector*
- **Southeast Loop Connector Alternative***
- Morgan Street



- Baker Street (west of SR 169)
- South Connector*
- Railroad Avenue (Jones Lake Road)
- Lake Sawyer Extension*

Language would also be added to Table 0-9 which lists the Transportation Capacity Adding Projects for 2022-2035 (page 25 of the transportation appendix). See attachments for details. Further, language would be added as follows:

Arterial and Collector Roadway Improvements

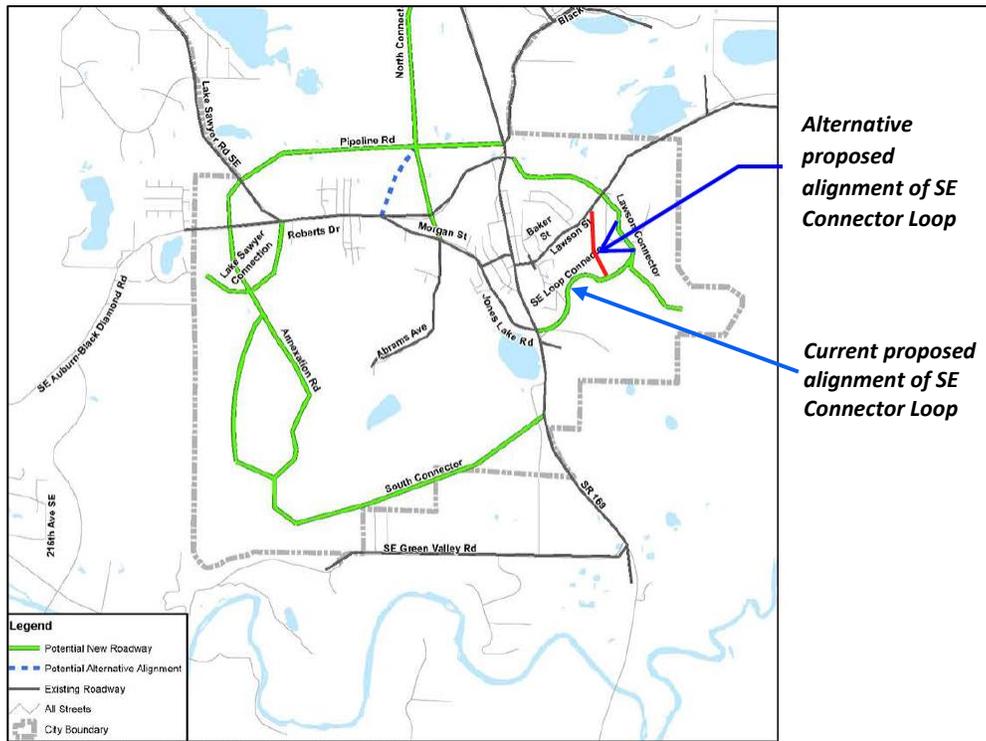
A conceptual configuration for the future roadway system in 2035 is shown in Figure 7-4. New arterial and collector roads include: Pipeline Road, Annexation Road, Lake Sawyer Extension, Lawson Connector, South Connector, Southeast Loop Connector **or Southeast Loop Connector Alternative**, and North Connector.

...

The Pipeline Road will provide an east / west alternative to Roberts Drive and will enhance the circulation and access for industrial development. The North Connector will provide a north / south alternative to SR 169 in the middle of the City. The Annexation Road would provide north-south and east-west circulation through the southwestern portion of the City's Expansion Area. Other new facilities are proposed to improve general circulation **such as the Southeast Loop Connector. The Southeast Loop Connector Alternative is a functionally equivalent roadway alternative to the Southeast Loop Connector, both of which provide secondary access to the Lawson Hills MPD and improve general circulation through the City.**



The alternative would be added to the maps in the following location:



Evaluation Criteria (BDMC 16.10.220)

A. All Amendments. All of the comprehensive plan amendments shall be reviewed under the following criteria:

1. Whether the proposed amendment(s) conform to the Growth Management Act (Chapter 36.70A RCW);

The proposal amendment is for an infrastructure improvement that supports development within the urban area of the City of Black Diamond. The GMA encourages development in urban areas where adequate public facilities exist to serve the development. The SE Loop Connector Alternative would meet the goal of providing adequate infrastructure facilities for urban growth.

2. Whether the proposed amendment(s) are consistent with and implement the city's comprehensive plan, including the goals, policies and implementation strategies of the various elements of the plan;

The current Comprehensive Plan identifies the SE Loop Connector as a future transportation improvement. This road is depicted as extending from the Lawson Hills MPD to SR-169. The language in Appendix 7 makes it clear that the routing depicted therein is not settled and that "alternative road alignments may be considered." The intent behind including a preliminary alignment concept in Appendix 7 was "to show a basic route," while expressly mentioning that "exact locations will be determined after engineering and environmental review."



The proposed amendment is consistent with the following comprehensive plan goals and policies:

- **Policy NE-17:** Minimize areas of vegetation loss and grading disturbance to protect water quality and prevent erosion, when developing on moderate and highly erodible soils.
- **Policy NE-35:** Preserve existing natural trees and vegetation on steep hillsides, along stream banks and other habitat areas, and where visual buffers between uses or activities are desirable.
- **Policy T-10 Pedestrians, Bicycles, and Transit Policy:** Black Diamond recognizes the primacy of pedestrians and other non-motorized modes of mobility. The City shall lessen dependence upon and the influence of the automobile by encouraging complete streets and multi-modal travel for all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit passengers of all ages and abilities. City actions will:
 - Require new roadways to incorporate pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities including appropriately spaced crosswalks on arterials and collectors.
- **Policy T-12 Transportation Health and Safety Policy:** The City of Black Diamond will provide a transportation system that enhances the health and safety of residents by:
 - Expanding the sidewalk, bike lane, and multi-use path network in the city.
- **Policy T-14 Character of the City Policy:** Enhance the character that the City currently possesses by:
 - Encouraging landscaping, parkway trees, and compatible architecture in the design and construction of roadways, especially SR 169, and other facilities along selected corridors.
- **Policy T-15 Environmental Protection and Conservation Policy:** Design transportation facilities within Black Diamond that minimizes adverse environmental impacts resulting from both their construction and operation. The City will fulfill this need by:
 - Aligning and locating transportation facilities away from environmentally sensitive areas.
 - Mitigating unavoidable environmental impacts.
- **Policy ED-4.1:** Focus investment in infrastructure and services.
- **Policy U-22:** Manage the quality of stormwater runoff to protect public health and safety, surface and groundwater quality, and the natural drainage systems.
- **Policy U-24:** Design stormwater lines or pathways to minimize potential erosion and sedimentation, discourage significant vegetation clearing, and preserve the natural drainage systems such as rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands.



3. Whether circumstances related to the proposed amendment(s) and/or the area in which it is located have substantially changed since the adoption of the city's comprehensive plan;
Since completion of the EIS, preliminary designs of the currently identified SE Loop Connector have identified several challenges associated with the roadway, including but not limited to roadway grade, right of way impacts, and storm drainage. The SE Loop Connector Alternative was explored to help mitigate these challenges while maintaining a supplemental access to the Lawson Hills MPD. The inclusion of an alternative connection to Lawson Hills can ensure when the MPD project moves forward that there are multiple options that can help the City respond to changing circumstances around transportation and allows the City to evaluate and select the option that best fits the City.
 4. Whether the assumptions upon which the city's comprehensive plan is based are no longer valid, or whether new information is available which was not considered during the adoption process or any annual amendments of the city's comprehensive plan; and **Additional investigation and research have been done on the SE Loop Connector since it was originally included in the Comprehensive Plan, compared to the proposed alternative. The SE Loop Connector has a steeper roadway grade, longer road length, requires more earthwork, includes several retaining walls, has more affected properties, requires a new SR 169 intersection, and is closer to existing homes than the proposed alternative. The SE Loop Connector Alternative provides an alternate approach that could be utilized if included in the comprehensive plan.**
 5. Whether the proposed amendment(s) reflects current, widely held values of the residents of the city.
The proposed amendment was added as a docketed item following a public hearing with the Planning Commission and was adopted by City Council as part of the final docket indicating public support for the amendment to be considered. The proposed amendment for an alternative route has fewer environmental impacts, as the route would require less area (number of parcels) of disturbance, reduced topographical impacts to steep slopes (which would result in significantly less cut and fill), and there would be less stormwater facility requirements (i.e., less pollution generating impervious surface).
- B. Amendments for Site-Specific Proposals. In addition to the above, any proposal for a site-specific development or amendment shall be reviewed under the following criteria:
1. Whether the proposed site-specific amendment(s) meets concurrency requirements for transportation and does not adversely affect adopted level of service standards for other public facilities and services (e.g., police, fire and emergency medical services, parks, fire flow and general governmental services);



The proposal would not cause the level of service on the roadways to fall below the City standards. There would be a need for improvements at two intersections to maintain intersection level of service (see item A4 above).

2. Any proposed site-specific amendment(s) will not result in probable significant adverse impacts to the city's transportation network, capital facilities, utilities, parks and environmental features that cannot be mitigated, and will not place uncompensated burdens upon existing or planned service capabilities;

The SE Connector Alternative route is through a relatively flat parcel of land that is outside of mapped landslide hazard areas. There are wetlands in the vicinity of the SE Connector Alternative, however no wetland buffers would need to be encroached upon for the SE Connector Alternative. Both the SE Loop Connector and the proposed Alternative will have to cross Lawson Creek using a bridge, passing through the Lawson Creek Buffer. Impacts from the SE Loop Connector Alternative can be fully mitigated, and development of this roadway would be funded by the proponent.

3. In the case of a site-specific amendment(s) to the comprehensive plan's land use map, that the subject parcels are physically suitable for the requested land use designation and the anticipated land use development, including, but not limited to, the following: (i) access; (ii) provision of utilities; and (iii) compatibility with existing and planned surrounding land uses;

The proposed alignment will likely only cross one parcel (1321069018) that is not owned by the proponent, which is suitable for development of the road (the road would cross the undeveloped portion of the parcel). The SE Loop Connector Alternative is a significantly shorter road than what is currently proposed and requires substantially less impacts to surrounding properties and will not require an independent off-site stormwater system.

4. The proposed site-specific amendment(s) will not create pressure to change the land use designation of other properties, unless the change of land use designation for other properties is in the long-term best interests of the city as a whole;

The proposal would not change the land use designation of other properties.

5. The proposed site specific amendment(s) does not materially affect the land use and population growth projections that are the bases of the comprehensive plan;
The proposal itself does not affect land use or population growth projections, but rather would be developed in support of growth at a time when the population of the Lawson Hills MPD would require additional access.

6. If within an incorporated urban growth area (UGA), the proposed site-specific amendment(s) does not materially affect the adequacy or availability of urban facilities and services to the immediate area and the overall UGA;



The proposal would not affect the adequacy of urban facilities or services. Instead, it would provide infrastructure that complements growth in the urban area.

7. The proposed amendment(s) is consistent with any applicable county-wide policies for the city and any other applicable inter-jurisdictional policies or agreements, and any other local, state or federal laws.

The proposal would be consistent with federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies. It would be evaluated in compliance with the development agreement and MPD permit conditions of approval.

Traffic Engineer Review

The transportation memo and documentation provided by the proponent with the application was sent to the City of Black Diamond's third-party, contracted traffic engineer at Parametrix. The materials the applicant submitted were evaluated for accuracy, viability, and to provide a recommendation to the City.

First Review

Comments given included confirmation of the trip redistribution in the technical memo, and a desire to see revisions to the traffic memo to identify improvements that would be beyond those, or those not evaluated, in the applicable Environmental Impact Statement. These include the northbound left-turn lane as an additional improvement and the new intersection with Lawson Street forecasted level of service. City staff concurs these revisions need to be included but does not believe these revisions need to occur now, but rather would need to be taken into consideration at the time of the project when the alternatives are evaluated.

After review of the alternative materials, the traffic engineer ultimately concurs with the proposed text and map changes proposed for the comprehensive plan. See attached Technical Review Memo from Alex Atchison, PE with Parametrix dated July 22, 2021.

Second Review

Parametrix further reviewed the additional traffic analysis items submitted by the applicant (prepared by Transpo Group dated September 24, 2021), following the first public hearing.

Comments given included confirmation of the revised trip redistribution in the technical memo, and agreement that the Lawson Connector results in a vehicular route that is more convenient than Lawson Street for most vehicles traveling north and west. The analysis shows that any impacts to intersections can be mitigated with additional turn lanes and/or changes in intersection control (e.g., adding a traffic signal). Transpo's analysis is consistent with the 2009 EIS but acknowledges that updates to the MPD analyses and assumptions have occurred – including that the construction of a fourth leg at the SR 169/Roberts Drive intersection has been determined infeasible.

After review of the further materials, it is recommended the interaction of the proposed signal at SR 169/Lawson Connector and the proposed roundabout at SR 169/Roberts Drive be evaluated in future analysis to insure that queuing from the signal doesn't potentially impact the roundabout.



The City concurs that further analysis will be done in the future when the roadway alignment is being selected.

Staff recommendation

After review of the application materials and third-party review notes provided by the City's contract traffic engineers at Parametrix, staff recommends **approval** of these amendments.

Attachments

1. Black Diamond - Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment - Review Comments from Alex Atchison, PE with Parametrix dated September 29, 2021
2. Lawson Hills MPD SE Connector Analysis from David Evans and Associates, Inc. dated September 21, 2021
3. Requested Comprehensive Plan Amendment – SE Connector Alternative from TranspoGroup dated September 24, 2021
4. Technical Review Memo from Alex Atchison, PE with Parametrix dated July 22, 2021
5. SE Loop Connector Alternative – Application Materials