



Central Alignment Dropped

One of the options to build the Cross-Base highway through the middle of the American Lake Gardens community was dropped this month by the Cross-Base Steering Committee. The Central Alignment, as it was called, was one of four remaining alternatives under review as part of the environmental and investment studies to build a new transportation corridor across McChord Air Force Base and Fort Lewis.

Three remaining alternatives are being fully assessed within an environmental impact statement (EIS) and major investment study (MIS). These include the South Alignment (formerly called Alternative 2), the South-Central alignment, and a no-build alternative. The two build alternatives are shown on the map on page three.

The action to eliminate the Central Alignment was made by a multi-jurisdictional Steering Committee with representation from the City of Lakewood, Washington State Department of Transportation, Pierce County, McChord Air Force Base, Fort Lewis, Federal Highway Administration, and the Puget Sound Regional Council. Under federal requirements, a project may not disproportionately impact low income and ethnic minority populations if there are other practical solutions.

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Cross-Base Highway Project Progress Update

Significant progress has been made in the review of benefits and impacts to building a new transportation corridor between I-5 and Pacific Highway across Fort Lewis and McChord Air Force Base. Prior options have been refined, an alternative that would have displaced relatively more homes has been dropped, and the environmental impacts of remaining options are being assessed.

The full analysis will come in the form of a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) and major investment study (MIS) that will be available for public review in February. Public meetings to review its findings will be scheduled shortly after the DEIS is released.

The City of Lakewood has reviewed the alternatives and potential impacts through an independent process. Agreeing that there are local and regional benefits from the proposed highway, the City has identified concerns that are now being addressed by the Project Steering Committee.

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Because other alternatives would affect fewer low income homes, the Central alignment likely would not pass this requirement. In addition, the Central Alignment had greater environmental impacts and would have required additional property from McChord Air Force Base east of the American Lake Gardens area, that may not be possible to obtain.

The Central alignment had been proposed back in 1992, dropped shortly thereafter, and then reconsidered last Spring in the hopes that it would avoid impacts to the American Lake Gardens Equestrian community. However, two critical concerns of the equestrian community - traffic noise and access to Fort Lewis - would not be improved by this alignment. Traffic noise impacts from the highway on these equestrian properties would be comparable among the Central Alignment, South Alignment and South-Central alignments. In addition, equestrian access to Fort Lewis would remain an issue between the Fort and the equestrian community regardless of what highway alternative is selected.

Environmental Assessment Identifies Benefits and Impacts

A number of benefits and impacts would result from the project, which are being documented in the combined EIS and MIS studies. In-depth assessments of the water quality, economics, environmental impacts to plants and animals, and traffic and relocation impacts are being performed. These disciplines, along with noise, air quality, hazardous waste, and social and cultural resources are being studied.

Economic Benefits and Impacts

One area of particular interest in the analysis is the economic benefits and impacts of building a new transportation corridor. Some initial key findings in this area include:

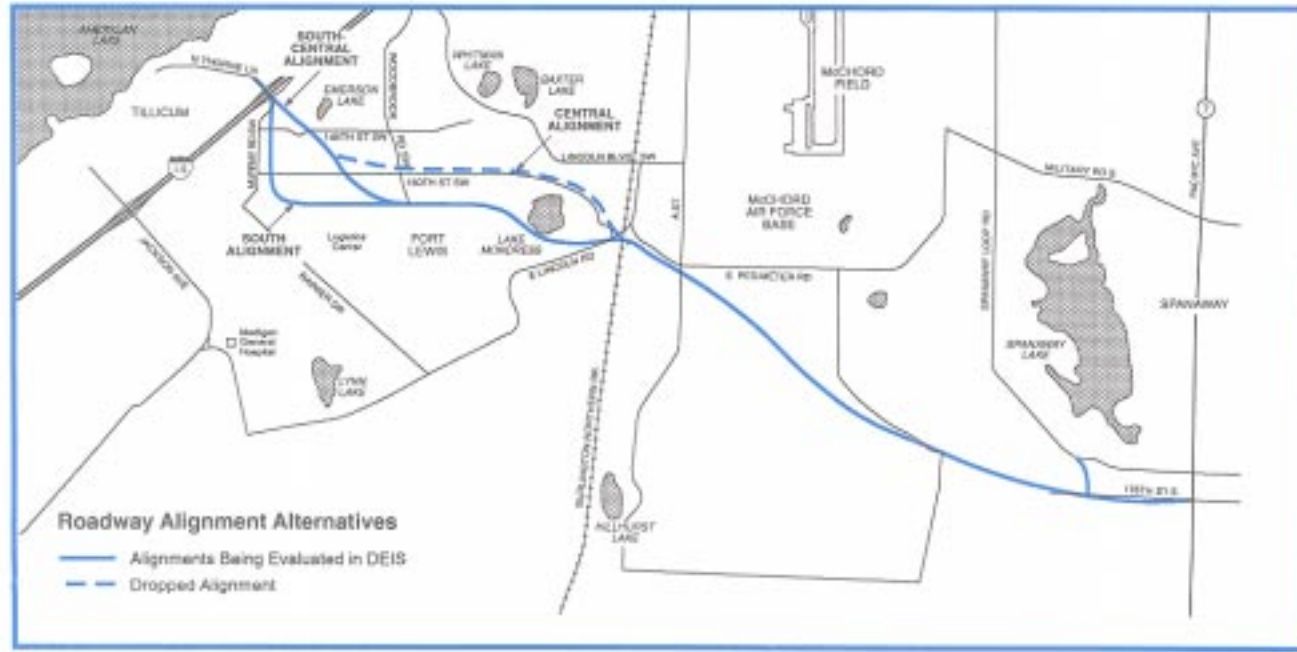
Traffic congestion along SR-7 would drop substantially during the morning and afternoon peak hours between 176 Street South and SR-512.

- Businesses in Lakewood would benefit from the roadway, as improvements in travel time and access will expand the geographic areas from which workers and shoppers may come.
- The road would benefit employees, suppliers and off-site customers by allowing easier movement of people and goods throughout the area. For example, Frederickson and Dupont would benefit, as would Fort Lewis and McChord Air Force Base.

Social Impacts

The most critical social impact is the potential loss of housing and businesses in the American Lake Gardens area associated with each of the alternatives under study. This issue has been at the forefront of the EIS and MIS effort. Reasonable alternatives are those that balance transportation, engineering, environmental, and fiscal constraints with the fewest possible social and economic impacts.

Economic, social, and other benefits and impacts will be fully documented in the draft EIS due for public review this coming February.



City of Lakewood Responds

The newly incorporated City of Lakewood, as a formal Cooperating Agency on the project, has taken an active interest in the project. Earlier this year, the Lakewood City Council formed an ad-hoc committee to advise the full Council on Cross-Base Highway alternatives. This group, which includes Lakewood City Council members and representatives of the equestrian and business community, have completed a review of the alternatives described above. The committee made its recommendations to the full Council on November 4 and the Council accepted its recommendations including in part that it:

- Recognized there are regional and local benefits to be derived from the Cross Base Highway.
- Recognized the City of Lakewood should benefit economically from the Cross Base Highway.
- Stated its belief that significant impacts would occur to the American Lake Gardens residential community, the Tillicum business community and the American Lake Gardens equestrian community.
- Found that the two build alternatives identified in the current EIS process are not acceptable as they are presently proposed.

The Project Steering Committee and Lead Agencies are working with the City of Lakewood to identify solutions and resolve the City's concerns. These concerns focus on potential noise impacts of the roadway to equestrian safety, possible realignment of the alternatives as they pass near the equestrian businesses, as well as the impacts to residences in the American Lake Gardens community.

A detailed analysis of these concerns is being conducted as part of the EIS, which will include identifying what kind of mitigations are possible and what improvements or changes are recommended.

What Happens Next

The draft EIS will be available for public review in February of 1997, followed by a 45 day review period. In February, two public meetings will be held, one in American Lake Gardens, and one in Spanaway.

These meetings will review the environmental issues of the project alignments, and solicit comments

on the conceptual designs. The results of these meetings, and written comments submitted during the 45 day review period, will provide further input into the refinement of the roadway alignments.

The final EIS is expected to be completed and adopted in the summer of 1997.

Tell Us What You Think!

The project steering committee invites you to comment on the proposed highway. Let us know if there is additional information you recommend we make available. We invite your comments on the proposed improvements. Please direct your comments to Patrick Baughman at the address below:

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