

MEMORANDUM

TO: City Planning Commission

FROM: Chelsea Burket, Planning Intern

SUBJECT: South State Street Corridor – Additional Information

DATE: September 24, 2010

At the September 14, 2010 working meeting, we began a discussion around planning for the South State Street corridor, from Stimson to Ellsworth. During that discussion, Commission members raised a number of questions, to which I would like to take this opportunity to respond.

1. Pittsfield Township

I met this week with Paul Montagno, Pittsfield Township's senior planner. He showed me illustrations of Pittsfield's vision for the area between Airport Boulevard and Ellsworth Road, which included mixed use (including residential), multi-story development with street grids and a bus center/park & ride. As we discussed at the working session, the only current bus service is the Route 6, which runs south on State, then east along Ellsworth. The Township hopes to either expand AATA service, or plug into whatever transit is developed as a result of the Connector Feasibility Study (though they are not in the current scope) and the Countywide Transit Vision. They also have plans to increase non-motorized transportation. They are already installing some bike lanes and plan to add more. They also plan on creating a new type of zoning district in order to encourage such development and preclude current land use patterns. Of course, Paul noted, this is all a long-term vision for the area and will take many years to come to fruition.

2. State Street Bike Lanes

There are existing-5 foot wide bike lanes along the length of the corridor north of Eisenhower, though they are currently unmarked for the most part. The City will be adding pavement markings at 4 points along the corridor, and signs at 2 points this Fall.

3. Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Role

I spoke with Eli Cooper, Transportation Program Manager for the city, and he explained the various roles that MDOT plays:

- a. They own the interchange.
- b. They have statewide rules for local roads eligible for state financial aid; South State is an eligible road.
- c. They coordinate planning efforts and act as a technical resource.
- d. They are a conduit for federal funds.
- e. They should be a stakeholder in any transportation/land use plan.

4. Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS) Recommendations

The WATS 2035 Long Range Plan recommendations largely align with those found in the Ann Arbor Transportation Plan Update, including modernizing signals, connecting Oakbrook, and installing a 4-lane boulevard with indirect lefts from Ellsworth to Eisenhower.

5. Area, Height and Placement (AHP), Mixed-use Zoning, and Parking

The AHP zoning amendments have the potential to change the character of future development along the corridor, which is currently zoned for O, RE, ORL, C3, and M1/M1A. All of these zones would have substantially reduced minimum front setbacks, and all but M1/M1A would have maximum front setbacks. O, RE, and C3 would all allow for an additional story. Allowable floor area ratios would substantially increase in all of the zones, most notably from 50% to 200% in C3.

While there is no mixed-use zone, per se, the Commercial zoning districts currently accommodate a mix of uses. However, these zoning districts also allow for strip-type development like we currently see along South State. One challenge may be encouraging new forms of mixed-use development in this area, without converting all of the land to Commercial zoning. Overlay zones and PUDs may be some tools that could be used to incorporate a mixture of uses and building types.

A commissioner noted at the working meeting that the current ordinance requires parking in front of buildings, however, included in the AHP changes is new language which prohibits parking in the front open space and mandates that parking be no closer to the street than the front of a building.

6. Floodplain Issues

The study area is located in the Malletts Creek watershed. I spoke with Jerry Hancock, Storm Water and Floodplain Program Coordinator, to look at the intersection of the corridor and any floodplain/way. There are two flood tributaries – one, south of Mall Drive, which drains east under State Street, and the other near KMS Place at the southeast corner of the State/I-94 interchange. Neither of these floodplains should pose much threat to new/redevelopment; however, Jerry suggested that the plan should recommend not decreasing floodplain capacity wherever possible. There is also a wetland corridor that runs behind Edward Brothers, with a spot south of Hidden Valley Drive, which he recommended remain undeveloped.

7. Football Traffic

Football traffic is only taken into consideration indirectly when designing roads. Traffic engineers design for the 30th highest hourly volume, rather than peak situations such as football Saturdays.

Thank you all again for your helpful feedback. Feel free to contact me at cburket@a2gov.org with any additional thoughts or questions.

c: Wendy Rampson, Planning Manager
Jill Thacher, City Planner