

When Washington County initiated this project in September of 2020, its overarching goal was to work with the community to develop and construct a multi-use trail along County Highway 38 (21<sup>st</sup> Street/7<sup>th</sup> Avenue) in the city of Newport that will fill existing gaps between the junction of Maxwell Avenue and 21st Street to 7th Avenue and 20th Street. The construction of this segment will connect to a pedestrian overpass on Trunk Highway (TH) 61, linking Newport east and west of TH 61.

Early on, specific goals were established for this effort:

1. Complete the off-road trail gap along County Highway 38
2. Improve trail safety by reviewing crossing locations within the project area
3. Construct a trail that is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
4. Implement an inclusive community engagement process
5. Coordinate with the City of Newport's new City Hall/Public Safety Building
6. Provide a design that minimizes adverse environmental impacts and meets all federal, state and local requirements
7. Develop a project that is supported by the community of Newport
8. Develop a project that minimizes public inconvenience while being sensate to project costs

In December of 2020, Washington County hosted a virtual Open House to introduce the purpose and need of the project to the public, introduce the project team and to begin the public and stakeholder feedback process. At the conclusion of this public engagement, engineers went to work developing alternatives to address the goals of the project while considering the input received at via public engagement #1.

From December 2020 through April of 2021, the Project Management Team (PMT) developed numerous alternatives to meet the project goals. In fact, eight (8) various alternatives were evaluated and considered not only trail location and design elements, but changes to the highway itself to accommodate the new trail. Various options included the trail being placed on either side of the road, narrowing the road from 3-lanes to 2-lanes, and various combinations of boulevard widths, lane widths and other modifications.

Ultimately, three (3) design alternatives were forwarded for public and stakeholder feedback at Open House #2 which was again held virtually in April 2021. An "Impact Decision Matrix" was developed to help determine the pros and cons of each alternative. Specific impact areas considered were:

- Social and Environmental Impacts
- Safety Issues
- Property Impacts
- Roadway and Trail Geometrics
- Estimated Cost

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Considering the impacts of the alternatives evaluated and the reaction of the public and key stakeholders that commented on the project, the PMT developed a “Preferred Alternative” which included:

- A 10-foot trail on the north side of 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue and the east side of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- Minimum of a 6-foot turf boulevard between the highway curb and the trail
- Reduction of the highway from a 3-lane section to a 2-lane section to accommodate the new trail inside the existing highway right-of-way to minimize property impacts

This “Preferred Alternative” was presented to the Newport City Council at their June 17, 2021 Council Meeting and was received well but without any formal action taken. Finally, at the July 15, 2021 City Council Meeting, the council approved a “Resolution of Support” approving the “Preferred Alternative” to move forward with final design.

## Next Steps

With a preferred alternative selected, the County will now proceed with the continuation of the preliminary engineering and environmental assessment process. Key aspects of this process will be:

- Determination of construction limits and property acquisition needs (if any)
- Utility impacts and relocation requirements (public and private)
- Completion of an environmental review process and determination of permit requirements for construction

The preliminary engineering and environmental document is anticipated to be completed the fall of 2021. Following this process will be final design and property acquisition in 2022 and construction of the project in 2023.