

Taylor Way Rehabilitation Project
Pre-Construction Virtual Open House Questions
May 27, 2020
Noon – 1:00 PM

QUESTION 1 – Will there be an overpass constructed at the intersection, if not, why?

Although an overpass would be a solution to many intersection challenges, it would create a significantly more expensive project than what we currently have funding to construct. The original purpose of the Taylor Way project was to reconstruct the roadway to heavy haul standards from SR 509 to E. 11th Street. During the grant/project scoping process, we identified an earlier WA State Department of Transportation report that recommended adding and lengthening left turn lanes in the eastbound and westbound directions of SR 509 to reduce backups. This change we were able to incorporate into our project. Additionally, the traffic at the SR 509/Taylor Way intersection is projected to improve once SR 167 connects to SR 509.

QUESTION 2 – I see a new long sidewalk is included in the project. How many pedestrians are projected annually to utilize such a wide walkway and do you plan on bikes being able to use it as well? How much bicycle traffic is expected?

A new 10' wide sidewalk will be installed from SR 509 to Lincoln Avenue along Taylor Way. This sidewalk may be used for both bicycles and pedestrians. We do not have projections for the number of sidewalk or bicycle users once it is constructed, however, there is a well-worn pedestrian path through the weeds along this stretch of roadway. Truck drivers have also noted pedestrians walking in the roadway/traffic lanes in the evenings where sidewalk isn't available. This new sidewalk will allow these pedestrians to move from the roadway to behind the curb, and will fill the existing sidewalk gap between 54th Avenue E that leads into Fife, and the sidewalk along Marine View Drive via E. 11th Street/Hylebos Bridge. Constructing this sidewalk wide enough for bicycles will also meet some of the goals of the City's Transportation Master Plan which has identified Taylor Way as a bike corridor.

QUESTION 3 – How will construction crews address the COVID-19 social distancing/work requirements?

The City requires the Contractor to comply with the Governor's Order and provide a site-specific health and safety plan to include precautions and work practices needed in response to COVID-19. The safety plan must describe how the Contractor will maintain compliance with the Governor's Order and the Office of Labor and Industries requirements. This will apply to the prime Contractor and all subcontractors. City staff will be following the same precautions and protocols while working with the Contractor's staff onsite.

QUESTION 4 – There are not any alternate routes to travel through this location of SR 509. What will be done to help traffic run through that area? If only some lanes will be closed, how much of a delay should we expect for the commute each day (20 minutes, an hour, etc.)?

During the weekday/peak commuting hours, all lanes on SR 509 will remain open. The Contractor will be allowed to close the shoulders for their use so there will likely be lots of orange cones, construction equipment, etc., in the vicinity. Lane closures on SR 509 will only occur in the evening (mostly after 8pm) and on weekends. On select weekends, there will also be limited access to 54th Ave E and Taylor Way. Working day commute delays will be more likely related to travelers slowing down to look at the construction occurring around them, to read construction signs, etc. It is not possible to accurately gauge the amount of delay that drivers will experience.

QUESTION 5 – When I drive from NE Tacoma towards the City, I feel like I get stuck in traffic waiting for trucks to turn onto Taylor Way, why not include a dedicated right-turn lane in this direction?

You are right, westbound travel through that intersection (toward downtown Tacoma) is one of the worst in the area. Most of the intersection delay, however, comes from other turning movements rather than the right turn

onto Taylor Way. The left turn toward Fife, for instance, is significantly busier than the right turn on Taylor Way. When both the City and the WA State Department of Transportation counted right-turn movements during the 4-hour peak commute periods in morning and evening, there were only 5-8 right turns, compared to 185-210 left-turns. As a result, vehicles waiting to turn left at this intersection end up queuing in the thru lanes and backing up all other movements. To address this, the project will be widening the intersection to add a second turn lane towards Fife and will lengthen both the existing and the new turn pocket. Intersection traffic is expected to improve with widening and this second turn lane addition along with other project intersection improvements and completion of the SR 167 project. With the planned improvements and limited number of right-turns, the benefit of widening the intersection further to accommodate a dedicated right turn lane would not be significant enough to support the cost.

QUESTION 6 – Given that currently the average duration across the tide flats past the Port of Tacoma is 20 minutes during peak commute hours for either a.m. or p.m., does the city have any indications of how much slower the commute from the NE Tacoma bluffs over to the Thea Foss waterway suspension bridge will be at the point of the project when the four lanes in both directions are restricted down to one each way?

SR 509 will be reduced to less than two lanes in each direction only at night or on the weekends. As these lane reductions occur well outside of the peak travel times, the City did not model the travel times.

QUESTION 7 –What measures have been taken in working with the variety of trucking companies who ingress/egress from I-5 into the truck staging area to reduce the impact on traffic of heavy loads at slow speeds during this project?

The project is designed to minimize impacts to truck movements to/from I-5, the Port's staging area and their final destination (should it be in the vicinity of the Blair/Hylebos peninsula) by scheduling lane closures on SR-509, as well as the reduction of Taylor Way to a single lane (whether to flagger controlled two-way traffic, or to one-way travel) to only occur at night and on weekends. Additionally, the time/day of these lane closures are the result of outreach with businesses that accept/ship freight along the Blair-Hylebos Peninsula. Ongoing coordination with the Port of Tacoma will also allow the project team to communicate major traffic changes to businesses, drivers and freight operators early, via email, text and social media messaging.

QUESTION 8 –Will there be any traffic signage sufficiently prior to the actual project intersection be in place to alert commuters of the potential need to detour, so as to reduce the quantity of traffic flow through the project's site? If so, where, and in what fashion?

Electronic message boards will be posted on the roadways notifying drivers of changes in driving conditions seven days in advance of any major detour or road closures.

QUESTION 9 – How will traffic be controlled during the phase of replacing the traffic signals at the intersection?

A temporary traffic signal and controller will be installed at SR 509 as part of the project. This signal will be on span wires hanging over the roadway allowing the Contractor to move the traffic signal to accommodate lane closures/openings. The temporary traffic signal will stay in place until the new traffic signal is installed. Similarly, on Lincoln Avenue, E. 11th Street and Alexander Avenue, the existing signals will remain in place and operational until the new signals are up and running.

QUESTION 10 – I know the video will be shared afterward, but can the slides please be provided on the website in .pdf and/or as the PowerPoint, so we can post them on our safety board for drivers to view?

PDFs of both the City's (Taylor Way) and the WA State Department of Transportation's (SR 167) presentation are posted on the Taylor Way website right above the link to this Q&A document.

QUESTION 11 – **What is the contingency plan if the weekend work can't be completed on time? Will the work resume the following weekend so you can maintain the two lane plus turn lanes on SR 509 on work days?**

If the work planned for a weekend cannot be completed before the expected opening the following Monday morning, the roadway is expected to open on time, as planned. Any remaining work will likely shift to another weekend.

QUESTION 12 – **What is the estimated cure time for the concrete pavement prior to opening to traffic?**

Cure time varies depending on the concrete mix design ordered by the Contractor. It can be as short as four hours, or as long as 3-4 days. The Contractor will use different mixes across the project based on roadway and driveway opening requirements.

QUESTION 13 – **Can you point me to the study that shows the demand for a 10 foot wide sidewalk along that total distance on Taylor Way?**

There is no sidewalk between SR 509 and Lincoln Avenue on Taylor Way. This stretch is where the 10-foot wide sidewalk will be installed. There is no study, based on existing or projected demand, that indicates a 10-wide sidewalk is needed. Taylor Way, however, has been identified in the Transportation Master Plan element of the City's Comprehensive Plan as a bicycle corridor. Although bicycle lanes were desired in both directions, this was not possible without buying a significant amount of private property along the roadway. A wider sidewalk was added to accommodate pedestrians, as well as cyclists that choose to travel separated from traffic. This new sidewalk also fills a gap between the sidewalk at SR 509 (from City of Fife) to the sidewalk on Marine View Drive (see response to Question 2).

QUESTION 14 – **Where will the traffic signal controllers at the NE corner of 509 be relocated to prior to reconstructing that corner?**

The existing signal and controllers will be removed to allow for the widening of the intersection and the various lane shifts over the project. The Contractor will install a temporary signal and controller that is more mobile and will accommodate construction phasing across the intersection.

QUESTION 15 – **What is the anticipated traffic impacts on SR 509 during work days when you have to close parts of Taylor Way for tracks or other work? Will any of the detours drive more traffic on SR 509?**

The complete closure of Taylor Way between Lincoln Avenue and SR 509 will only occur five times over the 14-15 month project. These closures are required to rebuild the existing railroad crossings. The closures will generally run from midnight Friday to the following Tuesday morning at 5:00 am. If vehicles on SR 509 need to access locations on the far side of the closed crossing, they will need to remain on SR 509 and use the Hylebos Bridge to return to Taylor Way. Unfortunately, there are no other detours to access the Blair-Hylebos Peninsula. Electronic message boards will be placed on the roadway seven days prior to each closure alerting drivers of the impacts. Traffic impacts were not modeled for these closures as are very infrequent and most of the work will occur during times of off-peak travel.

QUESTION 16 – **I'm surprised that they are not making a double left turn lane from 54th Avenue E onto SR 509. Can you elaborate?**

The original purpose of the Taylor Way project was to reconstruct the roadway to heavy haul standards from SR 509 to E. 11th Street, but through the grant/project scoping process, an earlier WSDOT report was identified that

recommended adding (and lengthening) left turn lanes in the eastbound and westbound directions of SR 509 to reduce backups. Constructing a second turn lane on the 54th Avenue East leg of the intersection (due to potential creek and wetland impacts, and the likely need to purchase privately-owned property) would drive project costs beyond existing funding levels. The intersection, however, is designed to accommodate this lane addition in the future. Additionally, the Cities of Tacoma and Fife have agreed to work together to review the benefits of a second turn lane, in conjunction with other changes along 54th Avenue E, and to seek future funding opportunities, if appropriate. Note, that traffic is expected to improve on this leg of the intersection once SR 167 connection is made to SR 509.

QUESTION 17 – All 509 staging work will be contingent up on relocation of traffic signal heads. Is this relocation time considered in your schedule of closures?

A temporary signal will be installed at this intersection as part of the project. The use of an overhead span wire to mount the signal heads will allow for ease of relocation without significant schedule impacts.

QUESTION 18 – Have plans been worked out with either Fife City Police, or WSP to deal with potential vehicle breakdowns causing clogs of single lane traffic in either direction?

Thank you for identifying this scenario. Tacoma staff will work with the Contractor and the proper agencies to evaluate our role in vehicle breakdowns along SR 509 when it is reduced to one-lane in each direction. Note, SR 509 will only be reduced to a single lane in one direction during off-peak travel periods (at night and on weekends).

QUESTION 19 – Will we be able to access the driveways on the north side of Taylor Way during construction?

Providing access to driveways/businesses is an important aspect of the project. Should there be a time when a driveway needs to be replaced and/or temporarily closed, outreach to the business will occur to identify a mutually acceptable day/time.

QUESTION 20 – Will there be an opportunity for public comment on the design of the riparian design for Hylebos Creek? Will the US Gypsum contaminated site on Hwy 99 be cleaned up?

The project does not include riparian design for Hylebos Creek or work on the US Gypsum site. However, mitigation required through the project's Critical Area permitting involves approximately 3,950 square feet of blackberry removal, soil enhancement and planting on the south side of the Hylebos Creek just east of the concrete bridge on SR 509 over the Hylebos Creek.

QUESTION 21 – Will full passage be open on 11th street between Marine View drive and Pacific Avenue? Will the draw bridge be reopened?

Unfortunately this is not financially feasible at this time. It has been many years since 11th Street connected Marine View Drive with Pacific Avenue. Since then, bridges have been removed, closed and rights-of-way have been sold. The bridge over the Sitcum Waterway, for example, was removed many years ago. Its replacement, including significant property purchases, would be on the order of \$400-500 million. The 11th Street Bridge over the Puyallup River was closed to all pedestrian and vehicle traffic in 2013 due to structural deficiencies. A 2019 corridor study performed by the City, in partnership with the Port of Tacoma and Tacoma Fire Department, indicated its replacement would cost approximately \$150 to \$160 million. Finally, the 11th Street corridor/bridges fall secondary to the replacement of the remaining sections of the Fishing Wars Memorial Bridge on SR 99 (also over the Puyallup River). Replacement of these sections is estimated at \$180 million.

QUESTION 22 – What is the anticipated impacts to traffic as a result of the SR 167 extension project when the traffic drops down on to SR509 NB near Alexander? There is frequently a tremendous backup leading up to Alexander (all the way back to Taylor) heading northbound on SR509.

The WA State Department of Transportation has spent considerable time and resources studying the intersection of SR 509/Alexander Avenue, specifically the future operations of this intersection once the SR 167 connection is constructed. Many options were evaluated with partner agencies (City of Tacoma, Port of Tacoma, and City of Fife) to determine the best type of intersection control to construct (such as a new roundabout or an upgraded traffic signal). In the end, it was determined that an upgraded traffic signal with modifications to the roadway would be the best solution.

Planned upgrades at the intersection include:

- A new signal and controller - this includes replacing two existing signal controllers (large cabinets on the side of highway) with a single one,
- Reducing the pedestrian crossings from both sides of the intersection to just one side,
- Improved signal phasing,
- Widening SR 509 to three lanes to allow for trucks to queue in the proper lane while allowing two lanes of thru traffic,
- Providing advance signing and signal pre-emption related to train crossings on the north leg of Alexander,
- Widening on eastbound SR 509 for left turns onto Alexander, along with widening in the median to help accommodate left turns from Alexander toward Tacoma,
- Allowing the traffic on SR 509 to continue straight through the intersection when a train is crossing Alexander, whereas currently all legs of the intersection go to flashing red.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the design accommodates the potential for a future unfunded project that could include a grade separation of the SR 509 highway over the top of Alexander Avenue.

In summary, the operations of this intersection will be improved as a result of the SR 167 project. Unfortunately, that does not mean that the peak commute times will not experience congestion. Congestion and backups will continue to occur, but the traffic modeling shows they will be less substantial and not as frequent as the current condition due to the improvements noted above. Also note, rail crossings of Alexander Avenue will continue to occur. These can happen in the late afternoon/around the evening commute and will continue to contribute to traffic backing up from Alexander Avenue to Taylor Way.