

# Parkway discussion is largely cosmetic

By Ari Cetron

The City Council started discussing design options for the East Lake Sammamish Parkway on Feb. 12, but some council members were upset that the decisions were generally cosmetic.

Peter DeBolt, of Perteet Engineering, showed the council design options for retaining walls that will need to be installed along the parkway. Different walls are better suited for different soil and topographic conditions, and the study so far has not pinned down which choices would be best.

DeBolt said that the types of walls can range in price from \$15 to \$120 per square foot, but that the conditions along the parkway will likely warrant walls in the \$20-\$60 range. "There's a whole litany of types of walls," DeBolt said.

Landscaping was also under discussion. Landscapers proposed putting some maple and cherry trees along the eastern side of the road and in the median.

The trees would be placed in coordination with property owners along the road so the trees would not block their views, said Dean Koonts, the project's landscaping consultant.

But the council rejected this idea for fear of diminishing those views. "I don't want to see any trees down there," said Councilwoman Michele Petitti.

She and Councilwoman Kathleen Huckabay both suggested they would prefer to have low shrubs, and rain gardens to minimize the amount of storm water that will run off of the road.

The council generally concurred.

As the discussion progressed,

Councilwoman Nancy Whitten became annoyed at the overall direction. She said she had been excited to hear that the council was set to begin tackling specifics of the parkway project.

However, she was upset that the council was only discussing marginal topics like the look of a retaining wall and the types of plant.

Instead, she was hoping to discuss big-picture topics like the design parameters of the road. Rather than discussing the look of retaining walls, she said she would like to find ways to be sure there are less of them, for example.

She said she would also like to look for ways to make the whole project narrower and cheaper.

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## No help for the intersection

In the course of construction, there may be little that can be done for the intersection of East Lake Sammamish Parkway and Inglewood Hill Road.

The timing has already been changed on the traffic lights, said Peter DeBolt, of Perteet Engineering, and that change is already helping traffic to flow more freely.

However, he said traffic modeling showed that expanding the intersection would not be a good option.

His firm studied three options, doing nothing, adding a dual left-turn lane from the parkway southbound onto Inglewood Hill Road and adding a free right turn from Inglewood Hill Road onto the parkway.

The dual left turn does almost nothing to increase traffic flow, DeBolt said.

The right presents a different sort of challenge. Adding a free right turn from Inglewood Hill Road would make a dramatic improvement during the morning rush hour, according to the study.

However, that quadrant of the intersection has a retaining wall and storm water management pond, which would need to be relocated to make way for the road improvements. This relocation would make the project expensive and not cost-effective, DeBolt said.

He predicted that when the work is complete on Route 202, some traffic will divert to Sahalee Way, which could offer some relief.

## Parkway

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"I think we should be looking at the basic design," she said. Whitten voted in favor of constructing the parkway project.

Later in the meeting, Whitten said she might want to revisit the project altogether, since the city may be facing tight budget times ahead.

Huckabay, who voted against the project, had similar concerns about the design and said she would also like to look for ways to shrink the project.

DeBolt said those topics will also come up but that the engineering work has not yet progressed to the point where he present the council with those sorts of options.

One potential cost savings, however, may already have presented itself. A bridge over a drainage culvert in the first phase of construction may not have to be replaced, as the initial plan had called for, said City Manager Ben Yazici.

"That could save us millions of dollars in the overall project cost," he said.

The East Lake Sammamish Parkway project was approved by the City Council on Jan. 8 after two years of study.

Once complete, the project will transform about three miles at the northern end of the parkway by adding left-turn lanes, medians and sidewalks.

At its initial approval, the project was expected to cost \$34 million-\$44 million.

Roadwork will happen in three phases, the first of which may begin as early as next year. The third phase is projected to begin in 2024.

The city will continue to discuss options for the parkway design in the coming months.

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