

CITY OF KIRKLAND

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS MEMORANDUM

To: Desiree Goble, Planner

From: Thang Nguyen, Transportation Engineer

Date: July 28, 2008

Subject: Response to Mr. Sabegh SEPA Appeal regarding Traffic Issues

The purpose of this memorandum is to respond to Mr. Sabegh's SEPA letter of appeal. It is my understanding that Mr. Sabegh appealed the SEPA condition that requires his proposed driveway to be restricted to right-turn entering and exiting.

Mr. Sabegh, as well as other interested parties before him, was notified prior to any application submittals that the site would be restricted to right-turn entering and exiting due to past traffic driveway safety problems in the vicinity of the project site. Left-turn and driveway accidents were significant on the east leg of the intersection NE 68th Street/108th Avenue NE thus; c-curb was installed over ten years ago to minimize driveway accidents. Since the installation of the c-curb, left-turn accidents have been eliminated at the driveways and driveway accidents have been minimized, as indicated by the accident data included in his appeal letter and Mr. Sabegh acknowledgement in his letter of appeal.

In the third paragraph of page two of the appeal letter, Mr. Sabegh wrongly indicated that Mr. Godfrey (City of Kirkland Transportation Engineering Manager) suggested that c-curbing doesn't work at the Safeway on NE 85th Street. There is no c-curb along the Safeway frontage on NE 85th Street. There are two "pork chop" islands at the Safeway site. In our meeting with Mr. Sabegh, Mr. Sabegh suggested installing a "pork-chop" shaped raised island on site to preclude left-turns. Mr. Godfrey and I told Mr. Sabegh that a "pork chop" island is not acceptable because they are not effective as evident at the Safeway site, unless it is designed as required by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). WSDOT "pork chop" standard design would require the entire frontage of the project site and would eliminate a considerable number of parking on site. In some situation, c-curb is still required with an island "pork chop".

Mr. Sabegh indicated in his appeal letter " I believe based on the new street improvement and opening a new lane to the north side of NE 68th Street right in front of my property, the middle lane (queue lane) will be used more efficiently and will pick up the traffic on this intersection much

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better by end of the 2008 calendar year.” Mr. Sabegh has not provided any engineering data or fact to prove his assumption. On the contrary, with the additional travel lane, longer vehicle gap in the traffic flow on NE 68th Street would be required for vehicle to turn left into and out of the site because left-turning vehicles would have to cross an additional lane width to complete a left-turn maneuver.

The AASHTO (American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials) Guidelines suggest a safe gap (within the opposing traffic flow) of 6 seconds would adequately allow left-turning vehicle to turn into the driveway. For outbound traffic from the site crossing two lanes of traffic, a safe gap of 8.5 seconds is required.

Staff observed the traffic condition during the PM peak period and saw the following:

- There were only six (6) gaps that were greater than six seconds on the eastbound direction during the peak hour.
- There were no gaps that were greater than 8.5 seconds in both direction on NE 68th Street to allow for left-turn exiting the driveway and heading east.
- The westbound through lane queues from the intersection of NE 68th Street/6th Street South backup beyond the site frontage with no break that would allow vehicles from the site to exit safely.
- Because of the long westbound queues, drivers are transitioning from the through lane into the westbound left-turn pocket between the middle of the site frontage to approximately 75 feet east or longer.
- The westbound queues blocked the entire site frontage continuously throughout the PM peak hour; no adequate gaps were available on the westbound direction of NE 68th Street.
- With the extended queue, safe line of sight from the driveway is blocked.
- With the addition of the future westbound right-turn lane at the intersection of NE 68th Street/6th Street South, left-turns entering and exiting the site would have to cross an additional lane of traffic and sight line would be more restricted and there would be more traffic conflict movements.

Mr. Sabegh also suggested in our meetings that he would provide a driveway engineering design (similar to the sketch known as Exhibit B in the appeal letter) and demonstrate such a design would affectively restrict left-turn during peak traffic periods and allow left-turn during less congested period. Staff agreed to review any driveway design that would automatically regulate left-turns affectively that doesn't require day to day manual control. However, since our meetings, Mr. Sabegh has not provided staff with any engineering design for review or demonstrated such a driveway design exists.

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As a general practice, the City of Kirkland does not allow the use of signing to restrict left-turns as safety mitigation because it is ineffective.

As indicated in my memo dated July 27, 2005 (see Exhibit B, Enclosure SEPA 7.c) regarding the project site access, the driveway does not meet the City's safe sight distance requirements. Furthermore, the City requires a 100 foot driveway to driveway separation. The project driveway has a 50 foot separation with the opposing driveway. The proposed project driveway is located to the right of the opposing driveway with insufficient spacing and therefore, will present left-turn traffic conflict.

The City's driveway policy requires 150 foot separation between driveways and intersection. The location of the driveway does not meet the requirement.

There are insufficient gaps within the traffic flow on NE 68th Street to allow left-turn traffic to enter and exit the project site. Thus, the left-turn entering the site would impede eastbound through traffic and queue back into the intersection of NE 68th Street/108th Avenue NE. Similarly, there are insufficient gaps to allow left-turn exiting the project site. The sight line distance at the driveway does not meet the City of Kirkland requirement. With multiple safety hazards at the proposed site driveway, left-turns should not be allowed.

Mr. Sabegh has not provided an effective proposal that would mitigate the traffic safety conditions at the project driveway.

