THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Staff Report

Council Meeting Date: May 24, 2022

Subject: US 25 (Merrimon Avenue) 4/3 Lane Conversion From Midland Road to WT Weaver Blvd

Staff Resource(s): Ken Putnam, PE, Transportation Department Director

Action Requested: Adoption of a resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into and execute a construction and maintenance agreement with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) in order to implement a four lane to three lane (4/3) conversion along US 25 (Merrimon Avenue) from Midland Road to WT Weaver Blvd as a part of a resurfacing project that will be completed by the NCDOT during Calendar Year 2022.

Background:

- As requested in Resolution #18-37 that was approved by City Council on February 13, 2018, City staff and NCDOT staff have been working together to develop alternatives for Merrimon Avenue that would accommodate all users and that would align with city goals and adopted plans.
- Through an" express design" process (Project # H191814) conducted by NCDOT, three alternatives were developed including a 4/3 lane conversion alternative from SR 2230 (Beaverdam Road) to I-240.
- When NCDOT programmed a maintenance project to resurface US 25 (Merrimon Avenue, Broadway Street, Biltmore Avenue) from Midland Road to US 25 (Southside Avenue), City staff sent a letter dated August 26, 2019 requesting NCDOT to work with the City to explore the potential for implementing a 4/3 lane conversion on Merrimon as part of the resurfacing project.
- An engineering consulting firm, contracted by the NCDOT, prepared a Capacity Analysis Report dated June 2021 to analyze the 4/3 lane conversion alternative developed in the "express design."
- The Capacity Analysis Report indicated that a 4/3 lane conversion could be implemented between Midland Road and WT Weaver while maintaining acceptable levels of traffic congestion and reducing vehicle crashes.
- In December 2021, the NCDOT and the City decided to seek public input on the proposed 4/3 lane conversion.
- A public meeting was held on February 28, 2022 and a public survey was open between February 23 and March 23.
- Over 300 people attended the public meeting and more than 3,000 surveys were completed. Results of the survey indicated that 59% of the respondents support a 4/3 lane conversion.
- Based on the results of the Capacity Analysis Report, the public meeting, and the survey, NCDOT and City staff have agreed to move forward with a 4/3 lane conversion along US 25 (Merrimon Avenue) from Midland Road to WT Weaver Blvd and to partner on the implementation.
- The resurfacing project has a total estimated cost of $2,500,000 and is anticipated to be completed by December 31, 2022.
- The NCDOT has requested that the City contribute $275,000 toward the project to cover the cost for adjusting traffic signal heads at each of the existing signalized intersections between Midland and WT Weaver.
- Although NCDOT and City staff fully expect the 4/3 lane conversion to be successful, the proposed construction and maintenance agreement includes a clause that establishes the criteria and conditions for which the 4/3 lane conversion would be evaluated if various safety issues occur, and if removal of the 4/3 lane conversion would be considered.
- If the removal clause is exercised, the City would be responsible for the appropriate traffic signal adjustments and pavement markings up to a maximum cost of $300,000.
- The NCDOT will be responsible for all maintenance activities, including the street sweeping as a part of their ongoing maintenance activities.
- If the City would like the street sweeping activities to be performed more frequently, the City would be responsible.

Council Goal(s):

- Transportation and Accessibility

Committee(s):

- Multi Modal Transportation Commission - April 27, 2022 - Approved unanimously

Pro(s):

- Expected to decrease crashes
- Expected to reduce vehicle speeds
- Aligns with the city's complete streets goals (multi modal users)
- Leverages funding associated with the planned NCDOT resurfacing project

Con(s):

- Peak hour congestion (rush hour AM and PM) is expected to slightly increase delay and travel time
- Transit vehicles could cause congestion (traffic backup) when loading and unloading passengers
- Community disagreement on whether or not to implement the project

Fiscal Impact:

- The cost to the City is estimated to be $275,000.
- Funding for this cost is not included in the current adopted budget.
- A Capital Improvement Program (CIP) request for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 is being prepared, and will be considered along with other CIP requests as part of preparing the Manager's Recommended FY 2023 Budget.
- After an appropriate time frame, if the 4/3 conversion is to be reversed, the maximum cost to the City is estimated to be $300,000.

Suggested Motion:

- Motion to approve a resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into and execute a construction and maintenance agreement with the NCDOT in order to implement a 4/3 lane conversion along US 25 (Merrimon Avenue) from Midland Road to WT Weaver Blvd as a part of a resurfacing project that will be completed by the NCDOT during Calendar Year 2022.

Attachment:

- Resolution
- NCDOT Frequently Asked Questions

RESOLUTION NO. 22-_____

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE N.C. DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION AND THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE IN ORDER TO IMPLEMENT A 4/3 LANE CONVERSION ALONG A SECTION OF US 25 (MERRIMON AVENUE) AS A PART OF A NCDOT RESURFACING PROJECT

WHEREAS, the N.C. Dept. of Transportation (NCDOT) and the City have been working together since 2018 to develop alternatives for Merrimon Avenue that would safely accommodate all users and that would align with city goals and adopted plans; and

WHEREAS, the NCDOT plans to resurface US 25 (Merrimon Avenue, Broadway Street, Biltmore Avenue) from Midland Road to US 25 (Southside Avenue) during CY 2022; and

WHEREAS, the NCDOT and the City have been exploring implementing a 4/3 lane conversion as a part of the resurfacing project since 2019; and

WHEREAS, the NCDOT and the City have concluded that a 4/3 lane conversion could be implemented along a section of US 25 (Merrimon Avenue) from Midland Road to WT Weaver Blvd;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT:

The City Manager is hereby authorized to enter into and execute a construction and maintenance agreement with the NCDOT in order to implement a 4/3 lane conversion along US 25 (Merrimon Avenue) from Midland Road to WT Weaver Blvd as a part of a resurfacing project that will be completed by the NCDOT during Calendar Year 2022.

Read, approved and adopted this the 24th day of May, 2022.

_____ _____

City Clerk Mayor

Approved as to form:

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City Attorney