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City Council approves Providence Road traffic changes

MARIA KALAITZANDONAKES Dec 21, 2015

COLUMBIA — The Columbia City Council unanimously approved changes in traffic flow on Providence Road between Stadium Boulevard and Stewart Road on Monday night.

The project includes the installation of two traffic lights: one at the intersection of Burnam and Providence roads and another at Turner Avenue and Providence Road. A traffic signal that stands at Rollins Street and Providence Road will be removed.

The project has been a long time coming. The first meeting to discuss changes to the intersection was in 2008. The original plan included demolishing eight houses in the neighborhood to expand the road.

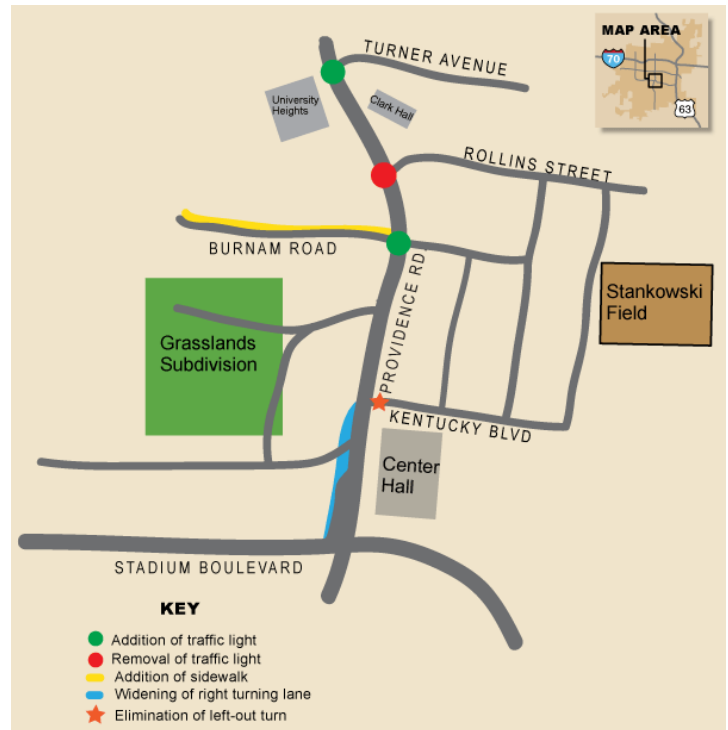
"This has been a long, controversial process," Fifth Ward Councilwoman Laura Nauser said.

The work will cost an estimated \$2,815,000 in construction and \$1,020,000 in easements.

Money from the Surface Transportation Program will cover \$1,852,493 of the project's cost. The remaining amount will be funded by additional federal funds and from revenue from the city's capital improvement sales tax, according to city documents.

The plan calls also for the widening of the southbound right-hand turn lane on Providence Road from Brandon Road to Stadium Boulevard.

"This extension will allow more cars to wait to turn right and not back up traffic," Public Works Department's Engineering Supervisor Allison Anderson said.



The City Council voted on a revised version of the Providence Road project from Stadium Boulevard to Stewart Road. The changes include two new traffic lights, a widened turn lane and the addition of a sidewalk.

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The plan includes the conversion of the Kentucky Boulevard intersection with Providence Road to exclude left turns. This means drivers coming from MU's campus will not be able to turn left onto Providence Road toward Stadium Boulevard, Anderson said.

A sidewalk will also be constructed along the south side of Burnam Road from Birch Street to Providence Road.

"This sidewalk will be helpful for lots of people ... There are a lot of residents in that area who walk or bike to work at the university," Anderson said.

This proposal made it to a council vote on April 16, 2013, but the council voted 5-2 to reject the project after opposition from residents of the nearby Grasslands Neighborhood and the city's Historic Preservation Commission.

"The Columbia Historic Preservation Commission is very concerned about the demolition of eight houses with historic value for the purpose of improving traffic flow into one specific neighborhood. ... (the project) will be devastating to the Grasslands' neighborhood charm and value, and to the University, Downtown and the city of Columbia as a whole," the commission wrote in a memo to the City Council on Nov. 13, 2012.

Anderson said this new plan addressed the previous concerns and wouldn't require the removal of any buildings. Anderson said the Public Works Department used feedback from residents living in the Grasslands and others to help create the revised plan.

Before construction begins, the city has to obtain easements, which are agreements allowing the city to use land it doesn't own. According to city documents, a total of 48 easements — 18 street easements, three drainage easements and 27 temporary construction easements — need to be acquired from 28 different property owners.

Construction is expected to begin in the summer of 2017.

Other council action

- Traci Wilson-Kleekamp of community group Race Matters addressed the City Council to discuss racism and community policing. She encouraged further cultural training for police officers.
- After a lengthy discussion, the council unanimously approved plans for developing The Vineyards neighborhood in southwest Columbia to include space for a new elementary school and to specify how new streets and sidewalks will be built.
- The council unanimously passed a resolution establishing an "Integrated Water Resource Planning Committee" which will be tasked with understanding how the city uses water and how the city can meet water needs in the future. In a separate ordinance, the council approved the use of \$450,000 for the creation of an "Integrated Water Resource Plan."
- A public hearing to discuss the Mill Creek high-voltage transmission line was set for Jan. 19. The project has drawn the ire of residents living near the path of the proposed 161-kilovolts power line.

Also, the council heard a report from city staff detailing a communication plan leading up to the public hearing.

- After representatives from at least two MU Greek organizations requested extensions, the council passed an ordinance that will allow the five fraternities and sororities whose houses do not have adequate sprinkler systems by June to file and receive approval for "a plan to achieve compliance" with the Columbia Fire Department.

Supervising editor is William Schmitt.

MORE INFORMATION



Providence Road construction nearly finished, but residents have grown weary

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