

# Memorandum

Date: July 31, 2019  
To: City of Spokane Valley  
From: Chris Breiland, PE, Fehr & Peers  
Subject: **Traffic Safety Findings at the Trent Avenue/Del Rey Drive Intersection**

SE18-0604

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On July 24, 2019, Jack Kestell, a real estate broker, hosted a meeting related to Spokane Valley and WSDOT's proposed intersection improvements at the Barker Road/Trent Avenue intersection. At this meeting, Mr. Kestell claimed that the City's "Professional Traffic and Safety Study" determined that there would be "multiple accidents, injuries, and deaths attributable to" the Barker Road/Trent Avenue grade separation project. At the meeting, Mr. Kestell distributed a draft version of Fehr & Peers' *Traffic and Safety Analysis* dated January 12, 2018. It should be noted that this draft (which was version 4 of the analysis) was superseded by new analyses, the most up to date being version 6, which is dated July 10, 2018. The later draft has more complete summaries of results and includes important information about the need for further analysis to accommodate an additional roundabout leg at the Barker Road/Trent Avenue intersection.

This memorandum is being prepared to reiterate the findings of the July 10, 2018 *Traffic and Safety Analysis* prepared by Fehr & Peers. It is important to point out that Mr. Kestell never made any attempt to contact the City of Spokane Valley or Fehr & Peers prior to the meeting to obtain a summary of the report's findings. In general, Mr. Kestell has taken the findings of the report out of context and misinterpreted the overall conclusions.

## Summary Findings

A key finding of the *Traffic and Safety Analysis* was that Alternative 5 (the preferred alternative advancing toward construction) offered the public the best network connectivity and best overall travel times. The report also identified that the proposed roundabout project and railroad grade separation would result in a far safer condition than the "do nothing" alternative, ultimately improving driver safety for all drivers on the corridor. Lastly, the analysis identified that the "degradation of LOS [at the Trent Avenue/Del Rey Drive intersection] will primarily be from



background traffic growth unrelated to the project.” However, BNSF’s requirement to close the Flora Road at-grade crossing as a part of any new bridge over the mainline tracks will result in some additional degradation of LOS at the Trend Avenue/Del Rey Drive intersection.

To address the LOS issues at the Trend Avenue/Del Rey Drive intersection, the report clearly identifies the following:

*“Stripe the Del Rey Drive approach to include a separate southbound left turn lane. The existing pavement width is sufficient to include the additional turn lane. If striped in this manner the intersection would operate at LOS C/D for several years before exceeding the LOS E and eventually LOS F threshold at some point close to year 2040. Given the inherent uncertainty in long range traffic forecasts (and thus when exactly the intersection would exceed the acceptable threshold), it would be premature to do anything beyond restriping the approach in the near-term.”*

The report further suggests that intersection LOS at the Trend Avenue/Del Rey Drive intersection be monitored in the future to determine if background growth further degrades intersection operations. If operations continue to degrade, the report identified a number of other intersection and access options, including a fourth leg of the roundabout into the Highlands Estates development. However, the report clearly identifies that any additional modification to the roundabout configuration would require further evaluation.

Nowhere in the *Traffic and Safety Analysis* did the findings suggest that Alternative 5 would result in additional traffic safety hazards that could not be addressed through ongoing monitoring and mitigation. As a course of practice, WSDOT, Spokane County, and the City of Spokane Valley routinely collect and analyze LOS and safety data to ensure that their respective facilities are operating in a safe and effective manner.

Page 33 of the *Traffic and Safety Analysis* did identify that Alternative 1 did have the “best safety benefits” overall, however, this is only true when one assumes that there is a single access point into the Highlands Estates subdivision. As soon as another access point is added (which is required to permit any substantial new development in the subdivision), the “predicted injury crashes for Alternative 1 [would] be similar to Alternative 5.” In other words, assuming a more substantial buildout of Highlands Estates and another access point from the neighborhood, Alternatives 1 and 5 would both have equivalent traffic safety outcomes.



## **Conclusion**

The *Traffic and Safety Analysis* clearly identified the LOS and safety outcomes of each of the potential Trent Avenue/Barker Road intersection grade separation alternatives. Overall, background growth in the region is the primary reason for LOS degradation at the Trent Avenue/Del Rey Drive intersection, not the grade separation project. Mitigation measures to address LOS and safety issues at all the study intersections, including Trent Avenue/Del Rey Drive were presented. In no way did the report identify that Alternative 5 (the preferred alternative that is now advancing toward construction) would result in a less safe condition for the residents of the Highlands Estates area.