



City of Grand Island

Tuesday, March 08, 2011

Council Session

Item I3

**#2011-64 - Consideration to Proceed with Closing the Union
Pacific Railroad Crossing at Elm Street**

Staff Contact: Gary R. Mader, Interim Public Works Director

Council Agenda Memo

From: Gary R. Mader, Interim Public Works Director

Meeting: March 8, 2011

Subject: Consideration to Proceed with Closing the Union Pacific Railroad Crossing at Elm Street

Item #'s: I-3

Presenter(s): Gary R. Mader, Interim Public Works Director

Background

During detailed development of the Phase I Quiet Zone Project, Public Works Department staff had a number of meetings with Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR), Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) and local business in the area of the project to finalize the design of the modifications necessary to accomplish the Quiet Zone along the reach included in Phase I. Of the four crossings included in Phase I, two (Pine Street and Oak Street) can be “quieted” by making modifications to the configuration of the approaches to the railroad crossing without having to install Wayside Horns, which is a relatively inexpensive method. The other two crossings (Pine Street and Elm Street) require the installation of Way Side horns along with modifications to the configurations of the streets, which is significantly more expensive, approximately three times the cost of the other two. Also during these discussions with the involved parties, it was found that there was substantial interest in closing the Elm Street crossing permanently and those parties expressed a willingness to contribute funding to the costs associated with closing the street at the Elm railroad crossing.

At an estimated cost of \$228,800, the Elm Street Quiet Zone modifications are the most expensive of those included in the Phase I Project, representing approximately 40% of the total project cost of \$590,200. Elm Street is also the least traveled of all of the crossings in the central part of the City, with only 7% of the number of crossings at Broadwell and 8% of the crossings at Eddy Street. Given that the most expensive Quiet Zone crossing had the least traffic and that there was interest from other parties in contributing to the costs to close that crossing, Public Works Department staff took a more detailed look at what the net costs savings might be for a change in the approach to the Phase I Quiet Zone Project. Closing the crossing eliminates the need for Wayside Horn installation, but adds cost to complete the closing of the street. With the indicated contributions to closing costs by the other parties included in the analysis, the net savings achieved by

permanently closing the Elm Street Crossing are estimated at \$209,000, reducing the total Phase I Project cost to approximately \$382,000. Additionally, recognizing that the potential change in project scope would affect the property owners adjacent to Elm Street railroad crossing, Department staff contacted the owners to advise them of the potential change. Department staff also consulted the Police and Fire Departments of the City. Closing of the Elm Street crossing is not expected to have adverse impact on the emergency responses from those departments.

With the potential for major cost savings, but also with major changes to the scope of the project, the Department decided that it was appropriate to advise the City Council of the option as it developed. That presentation was made at the Study Session of March 1, 2011.

Discussion

The Public Works Department solicits the City Council's direction regarding future development of the Phase I Quiet Zone Project. The options are to retain the current project scope which retains the crossing, with a total Phase I cost estimated at \$590,200; or to alter the scope of the project including closing the Elm street crossing, reducing the total project cost to an estimated \$382,000. At the Study Session, the Council expressed an interest in traffic pattern changes resulting from the closing of the Elm Street crossing. Please see the attached bar graph illustrating the relative crossing locations and the frequency of traffic crossings through the central portion of the city, from Broadwell to Oak. Elm is located near the center of the reach depicted. The two railroad crossings located closest to Elm are Eddy on the west and Walnut on the east. As evidenced by the attached bar graph, either of these adjacent streets has adequate carrying capacity to absorb the total flow diverted from Elm Street. Increased traffic on existing crossings is not expected to be a problem.

In order to provide a mechanism to determine the City Council's direction, a resolution has been crafted directing staff to proceed with the project in a manner to work toward the closing of the Elm Street railroad crossing.

Alternatives

It appears that the Council has the following alternatives concerning the issue at hand. The Council may:

1. Move to approve the change in scope of the Quiet Zone Phase I Project to include permanently closing the Elm Street railroad crossing
2. Vote to deny the change in project scope
3. Move to retain the current scope of the Quiet Zone Phase I Project
4. Refer the issue to a Committee for further study
5. Postpone the issue to a future date

6. Take no action on the issue – Department staff would view “no action” as direction to maintain the current scope of the project

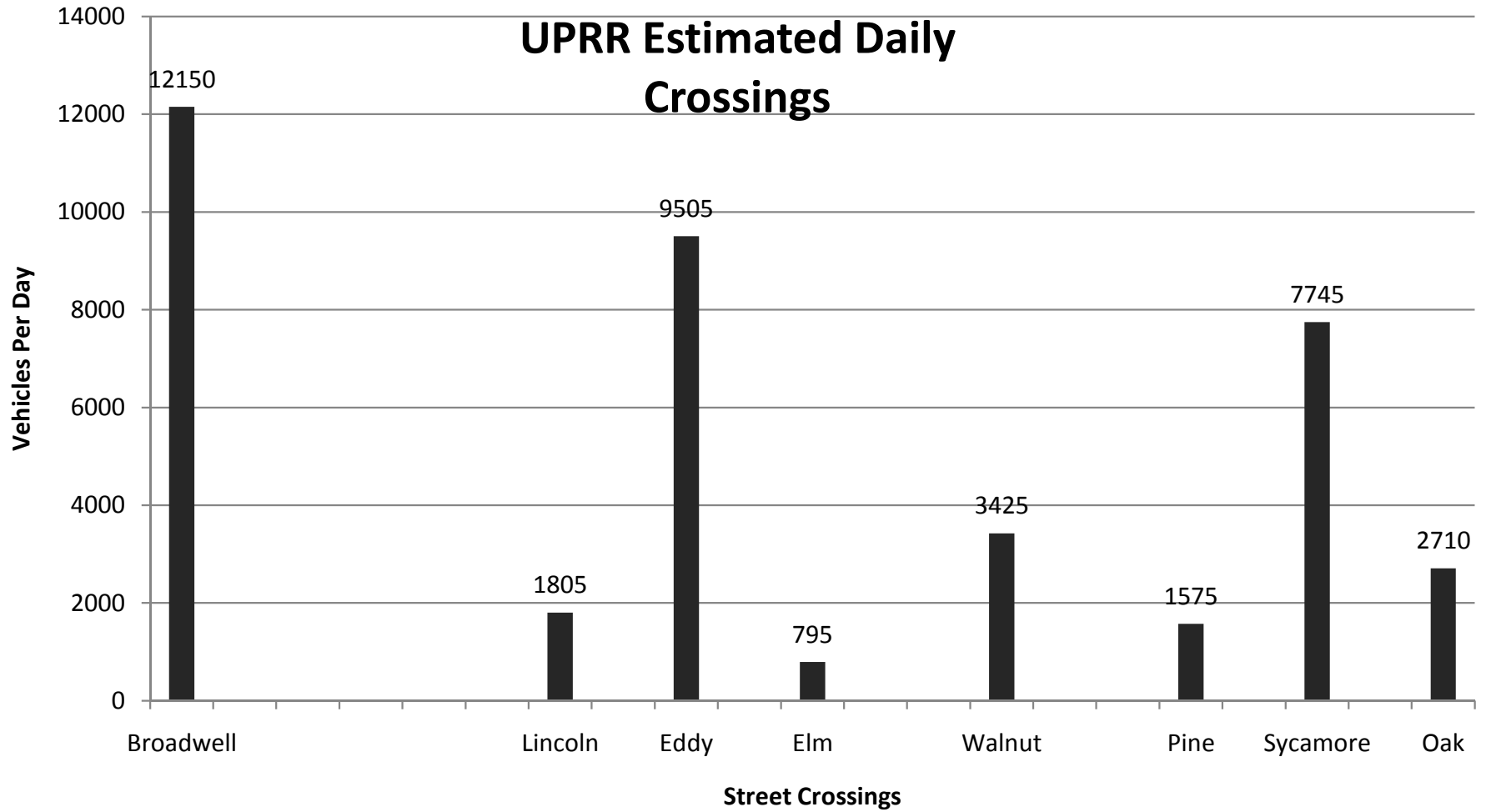
Recommendation

Because the closing of the Elm Street crossing is projected to significantly reduce the total cost of Quiet Zone Phase I construction and because that crossing is currently serving the least number of traffic crossings, it is the recommendation of the Public Works Department that the scope of the project be altered to work to the permanent closing of the Elm Street Railroad Crossing.

Sample Motion

Move to approve a resolution to proceed with closing the Union Pacific Railroad Crossing at Elm Street.

UPRR Estimated Daily Crossings



RESOLUTION 2011-64

WHEREAS, during the design stage of the Phase I Quiet Zone project, significant, unanticipated costs were realized; and

WHEREAS, the installation of Wayside Horns at Elm Street/Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) Crossing is estimated to be \$228,800; and

WHEREAS, Elm Street at the UPRR crossing has the lowest traffic volume, at 795 vehicles per day, of all the City's crossings along the UPRR corridor; and

WHEREAS, Public Works Engineering is recommending closing the Elm Street crossing at UPRR instead of construction Wayside Horns, which would result in savings of approximately \$208,800.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA, that the process to close the Union Pacific Railroad Crossing at Elm Street may proceed.

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Adopted by the City Council of the City of Grand Island, Nebraska, March 8, 2011.

Jay Vavricek, Mayor

Attest:

RaNae Edwards, City Clerk

Approved as to Form	☐ _____
March 4, 2011	☐ City Attorney