



**CITY OF TACOMA, WASHINGTON  
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
COUNCIL CONSIDERATION REQUEST (CCR)**

**TO:** City Council Members  
**FROM:** Councilmember Conor McCarthy  
**COPIES TO:** Elizabeth Pauli, Interim City Manager; City Council  
**SUBJECT:** Location of Utility Poles on North 21<sup>st</sup>  
**DATE:** February 21, 2017

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**ITEM/ISSUE PROPOSED FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION:**

**The following item will be scheduled on the agenda of the earliest available City Council Meeting:**

I respectfully ask for City Council approval of a resolution directing the City Manager to require that North 21<sup>st</sup> Street is designed to preserve at least three vehicle lanes of travel to accommodate current and future traffic on a major east-west arterial.

**BRIEF BACKGROUND:**

The City does not currently have the estimated 16 Million Dollars to improve North 21st Street. However, in 2018, Tacoma Power will replace the lattice towers and transmission lines located in the median of North 21st Street. The location of the new towers will impact the City's ability to reconfigure North 21st Street. Therefore, while the street project is not currently funded, certain street design components must be decided at this time, in order to determine placement of the new Tacoma Power poles. Based on current conceptual designs of the North 21st Street: (1) if the new power poles are 'centered', then only one vehicle lane in each direction can be installed; and (2) if the new power poles are 'off-set', then the City may install up to three vehicular lanes. City staff is currently recommending that the power poles be centered, such that the road will be reduced to only one vehicle lane in each direction.

The North 21<sup>st</sup> project is truly an exciting project for the entire community. The removal of the unsightly lattice towers, and the installation of sidewalks, traffic-crossing safety- infrastructure, landscaping, and other streetscape improvements is desperately needed to make this corridor safer for pedestrians; as well as a more attractive thoroughfare.

North 21st Street is approximately an \_\_\_\_ foot wide major four lane arterial and is part of the City's 'Auto Priority Network' as set forth in the City's Master Transportation Master Plan (TMP). It serves as an essential vehicular corridor for moving Tacoma residents across the City, through the west and north ends, to reach their homes and schools within these districts, as well as their places of employment typically outside these districts.

Though the addition of valuable streetscape improvements on North 21<sup>st</sup> Street is necessary for pedestrian safety, in doing so the City must preserve a vehicular arterial network which provides the most utility for Tacoma residents, and which acknowledges the present and future auto transportation needs of a growing Tacoma populace. Preservation and improvement of efficient auto transportation networks can be accomplished, while we improve pedestrian safety along and across our major traffic corridors. In accordance with Vision 2040, the City is responsible for planning for an estimated 127,000 new residents. Many of these residents will move into the City's west and north ends and utilize the North 21<sup>st</sup> Street corridor on a daily basis. Burgeoning development is currently adding hundreds of new residents to the adjacent Proctor mixed-use center. In order to meet the demands of increased 'in-fill' development, the City should preserve vehicular networks essential to efficiently moving vehicles around and through the City.

The City's current traffic projections for the North 21<sup>st</sup> corridor are based on aspirational assumptions concerning Tacoma residents change in transportation behavior. However, if resident behavior doesn't change accordingly, the community is left with infrastructure which is wholly inadequate (and underbuilt) for the needs of the community. Moreover, to date City staff has not been able to explain how the significant influx in residents will affect its traffic model, and it is unclear what assumptions regarding the increase in residents have been considered in its model, despite repeated requests for the same information. In addition, City staff has not addressed the concerns of emergency vehicle access expressed by representatives of the Tacoma Fire Department.



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Nevertheless, regardless of the merits of the City's current traffic analysis, it is clear that the most sound approach to accommodate the needs of a growing community is (at the very least) to maintain the flexibility for additional necessary vehicular lanes on major arterials (east/west & north/south). Arterials, such as North 21<sup>st</sup>, are essential to effectively moving auto-traffic throughout the City and deter the use of residential streets for cross-City traffic. Despite statements to the contrary, the reduction of vehicular lanes in North 21<sup>st</sup> is not required by the TMP; and the preservation of the same is wholly consistent therewith. Moreover, in testimony before the City Council at Citizen's Forum, representatives of Tacoma Fire Local 31 indicated a clear support of maintaining additional vehicular lanes for the swift movement of emergency vehicles throughout the City.

Following a separate Council-led community outreach, more than 170 Tacoma residents indicated that they want to maintain the flexibility for preserving more than one single vehicle lane in each direction on North 21<sup>st</sup>. It is clear that there is strong community support for preserving at least three vehicular lanes on North 21<sup>st</sup>. Moreover, it is also clear, that under any scenario, the North 21<sup>st</sup> improvements, will improve pedestrian safety crossings of North 21<sup>st</sup> with additional infrastructure.

**SUBMITTED FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION BY:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Councilmember Conor McCarthy**

**SUPPORTING COUNCILMEMBERS SIGNATURES (2 SIGNATURES ONLY)**

*(Signatures demonstrate support to initiate discussion and consideration of the subject matter by City Council for potential policy development and staff guidance/direction.)*

1. \_\_\_\_\_

**DISTRICT#** \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

**DISTRICT#** \_\_\_\_\_