

164th Street corridor

Council insists on outreach/mitigation plan before lifting development restrictions

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John Koster
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The County Council has told the County Executive they will not consider lifting recently imposed development restrictions along the 164th Street SE/SW corridor “unless we can simultaneously provide the public with a solid plan for addressing and mitigating the ensuing impacts.”

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The county’s Public Works Department is asking the council to declare the road at “ultimate capacity”, a designation that would allow continued area growth while at the same time requiring developers to pay additional traffic impact fees or reduce the number of new vehicle trips associated with their projects. The department is asking the council to act on the designation before the end of the year.

“It doesn’t make sense to produce a public outreach and mitigation plan after a declaration of ultimate capacity,” said council chair Dave Gossett. “We must have a plan to address impacts now.”

Escalating traffic counts along the heavily traveled street have brought most new development to a halt throughout the area between Interstate 5 and Mill Creek. In July, traffic volumes during the peak afternoon drive on 164th Street hit a predetermined limit included in the area’s comprehensive plan, thus putting the brakes on issuing new building permits. Development projects already in the permit and construction pipeline aren’t affected by the ban.

“Everybody seems to have dropped the ball,” said Councilmember Gary Nelson, “and put the cart before the horse. Time is very short.”

The council gave the department explicit instructions to address increased traffic-reduction requirements and impact fees for future developments and to designate specific infrastructure that will help surrounding neighborhoods cope with increasing traffic.

“We also want assurances that the plan offers long-term solutions and includes an effective public outreach program that involves the entire community,” said Councilmember Dave Somers. “This won’t be the last ultimate capacity declaration we will face, and we need to do it right the first time.”

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