

BERG SUN

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Should Western Avenue be widened?

Officials from the state Department of Transportation conducted public meetings Tuesday, Nov. 29, in McKownville and Wednesday, Nov. 30, in Westmere to discuss their proposal to widen and repave Western Avenue (Route 20) from Albany City line to State Farm Road. The project, estimated to cost \$3 million, may go to contract next year.

According to the proposal, Western Avenue would be widened from the city line to Gipp Road from the present 56 feet to 62 feet, curb to curb. Only resurfacing is planned from Gipp Road to State Farm Road. The divided section of highway near the Northway would be unchanged, except for a short right turn

lane at Schoolhouse Road for east-bound traffic.

At present, Western Avenue has four 11-foot traveling lanes, with six-foot shoulders on each side. Sidewalks are included in some northside portions.

The transportation department proposal includes a 10 foot median lane (five feet on each side of the median line), with four-foot bikeways on each side and sidewalks along parts of the south side of the road. Traffic signal locations and timings would be improved and left turn stacking lanes would be added at McKown, Fuller, Church, Johnston, Gipp Roads.

Included in the project is the acquisition of 65 small parcels of land. Transportation Department officials said that most of these would be one-to-two feet wide, but some could be as wide as 12 feet. Some drainage problems would also be alleviated, they said particularly in front of Christ Lutheran Church and Stuyvesant Plaza.

The officials said by making all the above-mentioned improvements, accidents along Western Avenue would be reduced by 39 per cent.

Area residents have mixed opinions about the proposed changes in the roadway. Everyone interviewed wanted a safer road. Some, however, do not feel that the transportation department plan is the best and are apprehensive about increased commercialization along the proposed highway.

The board of the McKownville Improvement Association has called for a committee of residents, town and state officials, and urban affairs experts to consider alternatives to widening the road in the residential area of McKownville.

The association board also called for a 30 mile per hour speed limit in the hamlet of McKownville (the same as in the city of Albany), curbs and gutters along the present roadway, proper road drainage, and walk lights at some of the side streets.

FOR THE VIEWS OF THOSE CONCERNED WITH THE PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVING WESTERN AVE. SEE 'OPINION' PAGE TWO