

## Median Guidelines – Case Study

### Project Information

**Project Name:** State Street Widening; 10600 South to 11400 South

**Location:** Sandy City, Utah

**Owner:** Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT)

**Project Manager:** Oanh Le-Spradlin

**Design:** 2016

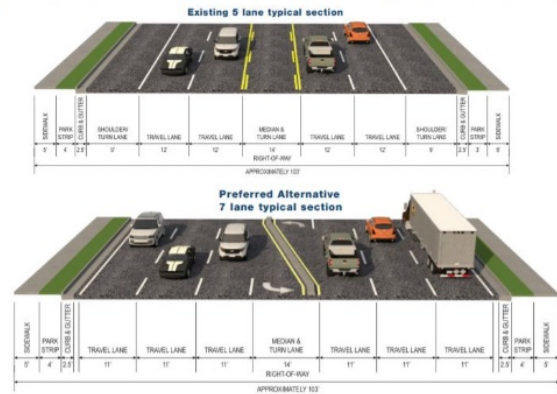
**Construction:** 2018

**Budget:** \$4.7 Million (State-funded)

**AADT Before Construction:** 33,000 (2016)

**AADT After Construction:** Scheduled completion 2018

## Typical Cross-section



### Project Overview

UDOT completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) to address transportation needs on U.S. 89 (State Street) from 11400 South to 10600 South. The EA addressed current and future congestion along this segment of State Street. The proposed action included intersection improvements with turn lanes and raised medians where needed, an additional north and south travel lane, drainage improvements, new sidewalk in areas where it is missing and a new roadway surface to prolong the life of the pavement. The project advertised in fall 2017 and construction began in spring 2018.

### Goals

1. Safety
2. Mobility

### What were the goals/objectives/key messages?

- Earning trust from the very beginning during environmental, design and construction.

### Process

#### **Public Involvement**

Earning public trust from the very beginning was paramount for the project team. First, the project manager gathered necessary data from region traffic engineers to support raised median implementation. Next, the team developed median-specific messages and conducted one-on-one meetings with each business along the corridor affected by the new median.

- Agency Coordination
  - o The project manager reached out to Sandy City to get their input and gauge level of support early in the environmental/design phase.

- Although the city had recently worked with UDOT on a controversial median project, they were supportive of construction on State Street based on the street's use.
  - Internal coordination was critical to the project as well.
    - Coordination with traffic engineers prepared the project team to present complete and accurate information to stakeholders.
    - During the environmental study phase, the project team upgraded the document from a Categorical Exclusion to an Environmental Assessment to account for possible public controversy.
    - UDOT leadership was wary of moving the project forward in the beginning, due to previous controversy on median projects nearby.
  - The Project Manager obtained traffic counts for each business access along the corridor before the stakeholder meetings. This data was used to help inform businesses about how people access their location and how things would work with a raised median.
- Key Stakeholders
  - Businesses along the corridor were identified as the main project stakeholders. The project manager, public involvement team and project designer visited each business along the corridor to educate and ultimately get buy in for the raised median.
    - The meetings were supported by crash data, traffic counts for each access point and clear information about how customers would get to and from businesses after the median was built.
    - This approach was welcomed by business owners who were willing to collaborate and meet with the project as many times as needed to come to a solution.
  - The project team made it clear they were approachable and willing to work with stakeholders but were firm that UDOT and the city had already agreed the median would be built.
- Public Concerns
  - By garnering support in individual meetings, the project team was able to avoid a large majority of public controversy.

## Design

- Design Development
  - Design was happening concurrent with stakeholder meetings, lending to a very fluid process.
  - Input from key stakeholders was considered and implemented where possible when finalizing design.
- Design Adjustments
  - In order to gain internal support, the project team provided UDOT leadership the opportunity to thoroughly review the design and weigh in on changes as needed.
  - When working through the design process, property owners of Crescent Cemetery were very concerned with the potentially limited access to and from their property as a result of putting in a raised median. The project team was able to work with them to provide a break in the median that would allow funeral processions to freely enter and exit the cemetery in both directions of travel along State Street.

## Outcome

- Most businesses were very appreciative that their opinions and needs were considered ahead of time.
- Construction began in spring 2018 with little to no public controversy.

## Lessons Learned

- Conducting one-on-one meetings with businesses was critical to both public and agency approval.
- Avoiding large group and public meetings allowed for more tailored, personal outreach and solutions throughout the process.
- Understanding each business' individual site access was critical.
  - o By explaining the traffic data and showing business owners the reality of how customers would access their site, the team was able to gain greater support of the raised median.
- Understanding the benefits of raised medians and being able to speak about them knowledgeably is necessary to gain project support.
- The project team was strategic and proactive in working with businesses along the corridor, however, overlooked internal agency coordination and approval.
  - o In order to combat this, the project manager educated leadership on the stakeholder coordination strategy and close coordination throughout design, provided an opportunity for leadership to review plans and make adjustments.
  - o Once stakeholder feedback, traffic data and design details were shared with leadership, the project was allowed to proceed cautiously.
  - o There were similar nearby projects that were all using different messaging surrounding medians. Each project would have benefited by working together to try and provide the same general approach to engagement.
  - o The project manager deemed it crucial to compile a competent public outreach and engagement team to get key messages out early and often in the design process.
  - o The project purposefully avoided election season to avoid becoming a target for political campaigning.

