

# Tucson Citizen

Editorial

## **Our Opinion: Wider Grant will be good for drivers, city, growth**

Published: 01.15.2009

You can't please everybody, heaven knows, but we're confident that the Grant Road widening ultimately will benefit the vast majority of Tucsonans.

The Tucson City Council heard from vocal opponents Tuesday night before voting 6-1 to proceed with this enormous undertaking. Councilman Steve Leal dissented.

Like Leal, we empathize with owners who long have operated small businesses along Grant Road. Their concerns, particularly in the current recession, are understandable.

But three facts underscore the soundness of the council's decision:

- Voters already approved this five-mile, \$166 million project as part of the Regional Transportation Plan adopted in 2006, so any move to jettison it now would conflict with that decision.
- Grant Road business owners and residents have had enormous input into this plan, with continual public meetings and focus groups over the past two years.
- And eventually, the widened Grant Road will accommodate more traffic - pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular - bringing more patrons to the merchants there.

Grant Road is to be expanded from two lanes to three lanes in each direction.

The widening, from Oracle Road to Swan Road, is critically needed.

Tucson has no good east-west crosstown roadway, and a wider Grant will somewhat ameliorate that shortcoming.

In addition, traffic is expected to flow much more smoothly with new turnarounds - special U-turn only lanes - replacing some left turn lanes, and with the new "bulb outs," slight curvatures in the roadway that calm traffic.

Granted (forgive the pun), Tucson will have grown considerably by the time this project is completed in 2018. But that's all the more reason to get this work under way.

The improved Grant Road also will feature bike lanes wider than others in Tucson, expansive pedestrian paths separated from the street by landscaping and space for a rail line down the middle of the street in case the city decides to add one later.

The change will be contentious for many people, despite the ultimate benefits to the majority.

The project will consume all or part of 320 commercial properties and 101 residential ones, including some homes dating to the 1920s.

That is a shame, and blame can be laid on poor city planning and zoning that long has failed to appropriately segregate commercial and residential zones, much less predict the growth that was certain to occur.

But the losses on Grant Road, albeit most regrettable, also are the price of progress. And those who travel Grant well know that progress there is long overdue.

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