



Interim Summary of Public Input December 6, 2007

Throughout the fall of 2007, there have been a variety of opportunities for residents and business owners to provide input regarding the improvement and widening of Grant Road. This report summarizes the results of public input received as of November 16, 2007 and is being prepared for use by the Task Force in formulating a draft vision and guiding principles for Grant Road. A final report on the input received in the visioning phase of the Grant Road planning process will be produced in February 2008, once the phase is complete.

The results presented here reflect public comments received through the following methods:

- 25 public meetings/community conversations with 659 attendees
- A web survey with 194 responses
- An intercept (paper) survey distributed in surrounding areas and at meetings with 338 respondents
- A telephone survey of randomly selected surrounding residents (328 responses) and businesses (77 responses)

The public comments are based on open-ended responses to the following questions used in the surveys and meetings:

- *What do we already know about Grant Road?*
- *What about Grant Road should be preserved?*
- *What are your concerns and fears about the Grant Road project?*
- *What changes do you hope for along Grant Road?*

A total of almost 3,000 comments were received from the meetings and surveys. The data were coded and sorted using qualitative analysis software. A descriptive summary of each theme was done to describe the common issues that emerged from the public comments. The results have been organized by theme within 4 topic areas:

1. Mobility and Access
2. Character and Vitality
3. Aesthetics and Environment
4. Vision and Implementation

Currently, all comments that have been received from meetings are posted on the website at www.grantrroad.info. A final public input report will be produced in February once all of the visioning meetings and surveying has been completed. The final report will include a backup document with all comments that were received by theme.

MOBILITY AND ACCESS

1. Traffic/Congestion/Safety

- The most frequent issue mentioned by people in the survey and at public meetings is the traffic and congestion along Grant Road.
- Contributing to the problem are a lack of bus pullouts, lack of right turn lanes, too many access points (e.g. curb cuts), truck traffic and the fact that Grant Road is a major east/west crosstown road that connects to I-10 with major north/south streets that feed into it.
- Effects of the congestion include traffic bottlenecks, frustration, accidents, cut through traffic into the adjacent neighborhoods, and dangerous conflict points between bicyclists, pedestrians and cars, particularly at intersections.
- While people want the traffic issues addressed, there is a concern that the improvement and widening of Grant Road will bring more traffic to the roadway, that people will use Grant as a crosstown freeway, and that there will be additional traffic in adjacent neighborhoods. There is also a concern that by the time the improvements are made, the roadway will be operating over capacity again.
- In order to improve traffic flow and safety along Grant Road, people would like to see bus pullouts, right turn lanes, additional lagging left turn arrows, consolidated parking and access points, better signal timing, improved intersections, narrower lanes to slow traffic, improvements to discourage cut-through traffic, and a landscaped median.
- There are certain design elements along Grant Road that people would like preserved including a crossing at Dodge for Catalina High students, the curvature of the road west of Campbell, center lane left-turn access, and left-turn arrows.

2. Pedestrians/Bicyclists/Transit

- Currently Grant Road is used heavily by transit riders, pedestrians, and bicyclists, yet it is not very pedestrian, bicycle, or transit-friendly. Current services and facilities are poor or lacking. There are few sidewalks and very little shade. Bicycle lanes are too narrow, disappear at intersections, and generally don't feel safe to use. They also don't connect to the east and west sections of the Grant Road study area. There are very few safe pedestrian crossings between intersections. Transit service is insufficient and bus shelters either don't exist or are uninviting.
- There is a concern that Grant Road being widened to six lanes will make it more difficult for pedestrians, particularly those with special needs, to cross Grant.
- It is very important to people that as part of the Grant Road improvements, the road be designed not only to be friendly and safe to pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and those with special needs, but to encourage alternate mode use. Suggestions include adding mid-block HAWK crossings, buffering pedestrians from cars, creating an inviting environment with amenities like shade, drinking fountains, seating, wide sidewalks, wide bike lanes, public art, and pedestrian-scaled lighting. Suggestions mentioned to encourage transit use include improving bus shelters, improving bus service, adding park and ride lots, dedicating a lane to transit, and planning for future street car or light rail service on Grant Road.

- Special attention needs to be given to improvements for elderly and disabled populations in the area and to school children who walk on and cross Grant Road on a daily basis.

3. Accessibility

- Currently, access into and out of property fronting Grant Road is not clear, well designed, safe, or convenient. Many hazards exist along the roadway related to people trying to access businesses or residences. There is a concern that the road widening will eliminate some business parking which could make access even more difficult.
- In addition to use by people from across the region, Grant Road and the businesses along it are used by many diverse groups who live along the roadway. Examples include the refugee population near Grant and Alvernon, and those with visual impairment who use the facilities at Southern Arizona Association for the Visually Impaired (SAAVI). It is very important that accessibility be maintained and safety improved for the diverse population along Grant Road.
- It is important that access between businesses and neighborhoods be preserved and enhanced. People want to be able to walk from their residences to services along Grant Road and have this be a pleasant and safe experience.
- Enhanced visibility of businesses, clearly marked access points, better signage, and shared parking were mentioned as important ways to improve access to businesses along Grant Road.

CHARACTER AND VITALITY

1. Mixed Use Area

- People frequently mentioned that the area along and around Grant Road contains an incredible diversity of different types of businesses and residences. This contributes to it being an eclectic and unique area with diverse populations throughout the corridor. People want this eclectic nature preserved and enhanced.
- People see the improvement of Grant Road as an opportunity to revitalize the area without changing its underlying character. Added public gathering places, a walkable environment, clustered businesses, more businesses and entertainment, work and live spaces, and shared parking were mentioned as strategies to enhance the mixed use nature of Grant Road.

2. Neighborhood-Oriented Businesses

- There are many small, independently owned businesses as well as neighborhood-friendly services on Grant Road. These businesses are frequently used and highly valued by residents in the area. Many specific restaurants, bookstores, home furnishing/improvement stores, grocery stores, drug stores, and other services were identified as positively contributing to the area.
- However, it was noted that not all businesses are well maintained and there are underutilized properties throughout the corridor that provide an opportunity for revitalization.

- There are unique districts along Grant Road that help create eclectic nodes along the roadway. Opportunities to expand and enhance these clusters should be explored.
- Grant Road is an affordable area for local businesses and there is a concern that the improvements to the area will change this. There is a concern that chain stores may replace local businesses as property becomes more valuable and is redeveloped. Steps should be taken to prevent the loss of local businesses and instead encourage investment in and revitalization of existing businesses.

3. Historic Areas

- Grant Road has many historic homes, buildings, signage, and neighborhoods along it and these areas should be preserved and enhanced as part of the road project.
- Opportunities should be explored to tell the history and unique story of Grant Road through public art and other improvements that are made.

4. Community Spaces

- Places like the Tucson Botanical Gardens, Doolen Middle School, the Boys and Girls Club, the pocket park at Campbell/Grant and Mansfield Park, the Ward 3 council office, and the fire station were mentioned by people as important community assets that should be preserved and enhanced.

5. Economic Fragility

- There are many working-class neighborhoods and affordable housing along and near Grant Road. People are concerned that current residents could be displaced as a result of the improvement project or may no longer be able to afford rents in the area. To maintain population diversity, affordability needs to be maintained.
- There are high stress areas along Grant Road affected by such things as crime, poverty, and vacant and poorly maintained properties. It is hoped that these issues will be improved, and not get worse as part of the public investment in Grant Road.

AESTHETICS AND ENVIRONMENT

1. Design of the Road

- Many people feel Grant Road is currently an eyesore. Poor lighting, lack of landscaping, run-down buildings, and a “sea of asphalt” contribute to the problem.
- People identified certain design elements they would like preserved along Grant including the mature landscape that currently exists and the pocket park at Campbell and Grant. People would like to see existing curvature in the road maintained and possibly more curves added.
- Utilities were mentioned frequently and most people would prefer they be put underground if feasible. There was concern expressed that existing utilities would be moved closer to neighborhoods as a result of the project.

- People would like to see Grant Road made “prettier”. Specific suggestions include public art, trees, landscaping, pedestrian-scale lighting, modern and covered bus shelters, public spaces, parks, better signage, underground utilities, and a reduced number of billboards.

2. Environmental Issues and Flooding

- Many people discussed the storm water flooding problems on Grant Road as well as in the adjacent neighborhoods and would like drainage improved as part of the project. Water harvesting was also frequently suggested.
- The air quality along Grant is seen as poor partly due to lack of landscaping and the existence of so much asphalt. There is a concern that this may only get worse with the widening of Grant, but it is hoped that added landscaping will improve the existing environment. People would like to see heat island mitigation techniques used in the road improvement including landscaping, shade, and use of permeable surfaces.

3. Buffering and Noise

- Many people feel Grant is noisy now and are concerned this could get worse with the road widening. People would like to see noise mitigation techniques used in the road improvement including sound walls, landscaping, buffering, and rubberized asphalt.
- It is important to people that the transitions between the neighborhoods, commercial areas, and the road be aesthetically pleasing, safe, and pedestrian-friendly.

4. Making it Green

- It was suggested by many people that Grant Road could be a model for a “green road project,” and that innovative, environmentally-friendly approaches and green construction techniques be used. Specific suggestions include water harvesting, green building techniques, solar lighting, open spaces, permeable surfaces, urban gardens, green nodes, preserving dark skies, and encouraging alternate fuel vehicles.

VISION AND IMPLEMENTATION

1. Impacts of Construction

- Concerns about congestion and delays for travelers and commuters during the construction process were expressed by many people.
- The noise, dirt, and mess during the process are a concern.
- Negative impacts businesses will experience during construction and how they will fare during the process are a concern. It is important that access to businesses be maintained during construction.
- People are concerned about cut-through traffic into the neighborhoods during construction as well as overflow onto other nearby east/west streets, and would like measures to be taken to prevent this.

- It is important that transit service and bicycle lanes be maintained during construction.
- It was suggested that construction be done in phases to limit impacts to specific areas and be coordinated with other construction projects that may be occurring in the area.

2. Property Acquisition

- There is a concern about which side of the road will need to be acquired to widen Grant and which properties will be affected. Currently there is a lot of uncertainty for property owners prior to the alignment determination.
- There is a concern that property owners will not be fairly compensated for acquired property or that partial takings will render remaining property unusable.
- Maintaining vacant properties prior to and during construction as well as using surplus property for a public good were mentioned as a priority.

3. Wrong Approach

- Some people feel that widening Grant Road is not the right approach and this is about making the best of a bad situation. With the higher cost of fuel and global warming, some wonder why we are encouraging auto use with additional travel lanes. Some suggested the funding should go to light-rail or other alternatives to the car.
- Some feel that this project is encouraging growth and sprawl and fear that Tucson will end up like Phoenix or L.A. Others feel that Tucson needs a crosstown freeway.

4. Getting it Done Right and On Time

- Many people are disappointed in the length of time it will take until the project will be completed – they want it done now.
- There is a concern that lack of funds will mean the project does not get completed as planned or that “amenities” will have to be cut.
- There is a concern that public input will not be used and that the effort to gather public input will be a waste. Some believe that political changes could affect the project direction, or political leaders may choose not to use public input. There is a concern that regional voices will override local voices in the design that is chosen.
- It is hoped that the project will get done right and on time and that the design will be sensitive and logical. It was suggested that additional funding be sought now to make sure the full project can be built.