

Summary

WARD III Council Conversation Summary, November 7, 2007

Council Member Uhlich: “What I heard you say...” – summary after feedback from table conversations and mapping activity.

- Concern that costs will be greater than the established budget and the need to revisit the planning process and provide additional information – Council Member Uhlich and Jim Glock will meet with the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) to talk about additional project information and possible constraints on the project and share back with the public.
- Grant Rd. is not “just a road”, i.e. it’s a livable place for local businesses, neighborhoods and the community.
- Emphasis of concerns that the project be sustainable.
- Understanding that residents’ needs are different than businesses’ needs and that both have to be addressed as we go through the planning process.
- Assurance to the public that they will be heard.

Feedback from Table Conversations (4-5 key points of their map/recorded comments)

❖ Judith/David – Table #1:

- Hope: That the whole project will be safe for all forms of traffic, including pedestrians and bus pullouts.
- Hope: If the project is too expensive, then look at doing intersection improvements with bus pullouts. This would be done only as a last resort. Another Hope is to start the project with intersection improvements.
- Hope: That there will not be a loss of the area’s character as examples by preservation of businesses, housing and minimal displacement and loss of vegetation.
- Fear: That there will be cost overages and the funding won’t stretch to cover everything in the plans.

❖ Beau/Liz – Table #2:

- Try to keep the bicyclists and pedestrians separate from the roadway by adding a buffer.
- Treat people (businesses and residents) well (specifically regarding land loss).
- Improve public safety by keeping secondary transportation from Grant Rd. and limiting access to neighborhoods.

- Minimize noise impact.
- Maintain and improve business viability, i.e. friendliness of the roadway to [local] businesses.

❖ **Christine/Karen – Table #3:**

- Concern that there's not enough money and need to look at other sources of funding to do the project.
- Do not want another Speedway Blvd., which is too sterile and doesn't demonstrate "connectivity" (between businesses and neighborhoods).
- Hope: To create "something marvelous", including impact on neighborhoods a mile away, with demonstrated elements of alternative technology uses, and vegetation and shade.
- If property has to be taken, don't take 10 feet of the property and diminish the quality of life of the resident or business – take the whole property.
- Two additional lanes are allocated, but we have a chance to act (based on increased costs of construction materials) and demonstrate use of alternative technologies including an express route for buses, underscoring the principle: move people, not just cars.

❖ **Vern/Bev – Table #4:**

- Concern about property values within several blocks of the roadway; also concerns about additional traffic and noise impacts.
- The improved roadway won't solve the traffic problem.
- Hope: To have a balance in planning for alternative modes, i.e. bicycles and mass transit.
- Need to "keep it Tucson" – with open spaces.
- Keep "Mom and Pop" businesses with improved parking.

Recorded Comments from Table Mapping Activity

Question 1: What do we already know about Grant Rd.?

- There's no turn signal at Tucson Blvd.
- There is a "unique flavor" to the roadway with little, locally owned businesses, like antique shops; don't displace them.
- High volume of refugees at Alvernon Way.
- Residents live on Grant Rd.
- Current deed restrictions – residents only.
- Tucson Blvd. and Campbell Ave. area where residents are closer to traffic.
- Concentration of visually impaired population by the Southern Arizona Association for the Visually Impaired (SAAVI).
- Alvernon Way area has many who use wheelchairs and/or with other disabilities.
- Right turn lane at Alvernon Way.
- There is old, mature vegetation – save these trees.
- Two stage crossings at intersections are needed.

- It's a bland area with little or no vegetation.
- It was designed for cars and people at a time when gas was cheap.
- People enjoy walking and cultural things such as the Tucson Botanical Gardens, Doolen Middle School.
- Many historic homes.
- It is used as a transit corridor but has no bus pullouts.
- Need to move people, not heavy vehicles.
- An area with multiple uses – for churches, schools, businesses, residents.
- It's noisy, busy with lots of competition (activities).
- Grant Rd. has older neighborhoods with small lots and mixed residential and business areas.
- It doesn't have much character.
- It's eclectic.
- It has limited business parking.
- It has frequent traffic blockages.
- It's dangerous for school children to cross.
- There are insufficient traffic control devices at Dodge Blvd./ Alvernon Way/Palo Verde Blvd.
- It lacks landscaping and amenities.
- It has inadequate transit services.
- It has inadequate street lighting.
- Congestion at Alvernon Way needs to be changed.
- Floods at Alvernon Way, Tucson Blvd. and Country Club Rd. need to be changed.
- High meth activity area (around Alvernon Way).
- SAAVI [is between Dodge Blvd. and Haskell Dr.] – mobility aided pedestrians.
- Not enough pedestrian refuge, which is needed for two-stage crossing at all intersections.
- No bus pullouts, but used as a mass transit corridor; heavy truck traffic.
- Room and possibility for alternative modes of transportation.
- Deed restrictions (neighborhood south of Grant Rd. along Tucson Blvd. to Elm St.) – should force people to be residents not businesses, particularly for homes that face Grant Rd.
- Unknown changes at Campbell Ave. and Grant Rd.
- Unintended consequences.
- Heavy mixed traffic and potential hazards at Dodge Blvd.
- Bike lane is inadequate and dangerous/right next to traffic. (Note: recent bicycle-car collision at Columbus Blvd. and Grant Rd.)
- East of Columbus Blvd. alignment may require property demolition.
- What about development already in place? For example, at Norris Ave.
- Pocket park at Campbell Ave. and Grant Rd.

- High stress area around 1st Ave.
- Current proposal to improve Park Ave./enhancements.
- There is a multi-mode commuter route along Mountain Ave. to/from the University of Arizona (UA), and Salpointe Catholic High School.
- [In the area of Oracle Rd.]: character.
- Poor lighting.
- People aren't looking for bike routes.
- Potential deals are going on with developers – example: south east corner of Grant Rd. and Campbell Ave. will be taken out to put up condos; a human corridor.
- Heavy mixed-use.
- Pedestrian walking to and from neighborhoods.

Question 2: What characteristics along Grant Road should be preserved?

- The current frontage road buffer at Tucson Blvd. and Campbell Ave.
- Housing (particularly older ones/historic structures); examples: between Santa Rita Ave./Mountain Ave., at Vine Ave., between 1st Ave. and Mountain Ave.; shopping, banking and restaurants between Tucson Blvd. and Country Club Rd.
- Unique businesses; examples: Kent's Tools, Bobo's, Las Margarita's, Robert's, antique and furniture businesses.
- Mature vegetation and landscaping (on south side between 2nd and 6th Aves. around Country Club Rd.).
- Doolen Middle School (and light by the school), Boys and Girls Club.
- Fire House, Ward III Council Office.
- Funky character; the curves.
- My house – Wilson Ave. and Grant Rd.
- Community Centers.
- Entrances into neighborhoods.
- Current stoplights.
- Communities to remain open, not wall enclosed.
- Need to keep the concept of defensible space in mind in order to preserve the integrity of diverse, unique neighborhoods.
- Historic signage, examples: Grant Road Lumber and the auto repair shop across the street.
- Historic structures, locally owned businesses, curves, existing communities.
- South along Grant Rd., 1st Ave. to Campbell Ave.: "Keep the kink or give it more kink."

Questions 3: What do you think will change in the future?

And Question 4: How will these changes affect the area?

- It will become faster, noisier with more traffic.
- It will become harder for pedestrians to cross.
- Greater reliance on public transit, bicycles, and more pedestrians.

- Traffic congestion will be worse despite higher gas prices.
- Prices of metal, concrete, fuel will go up so we need to reuse technology, which will be more sophisticated.
- Carbon emissions are front page.
- It will be less residential and more commercial.
- Improved intersections.
- There will be cut through traffic during construction.
- Mixed-use overlay will be put in place without knowledge or input from current property owners – problems such as mini-dorms allowed to increase as a result.
- Charge money for (using) cars.

Question 5: What characteristics along Grant Rd. should be changed?

- Need pedestrian access.
- There are flood areas (Alvernon Way, Warren Ave., Dodge Blvd. and Cherry Ave.) that need to be addressed.
- Remove above ground power lines.
- Need bus stop pullouts at every stop and bus stop shelters.
- Need frontage road “beefed up” in Tucson Blvd. area.
- Need pedestrian overpass.
- Everything!
- Prevent cut-through traffic into residential areas.
- Synchronize signal lights.
- Add buffer on both sides (for noise, add space) for pedestrians, dog walkers, etc.
- Safety areas for pedestrian crossings; safe bike and walk.
- Noise abatement.
- Improve current clash between pedestrians, bicycles and cars (Alvernon Way).
- Wider bike lanes throughout.
- Discourage jay walking at bus stops.
- Need more HAWK lights.
- The absence of dedicated turn lanes needs to be changed.
- Discourage transients from sleeping near SAAVI.
- Congested areas (Alvernon Way).
- Curve at Campbell Ave. that slows traffic.
- *Park and Ride* on perimeters – lots of mass transit.
- Eliminate dangerous bike lanes – save 12 ft. of width/bikes on half-mile road like Blackledge Dr., Pima St., etc.
- Add washes or direct stormwater to washes.
- More mass transit, *Park and Rides*.
- More sidewalks and sidewalks need landscaping buffers and to be “pet friendly”.
- Separate pedestrian and bike corridors.

- Water for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Alternative, renewable energy role-modeling that is visible to the public; examples: solar panels and shade structures.
- Water harvesting, shade, landscaping.
- Structures and planning that restrict traffic and enhance existing communities to restrict cut through; example: around Dodge Blvd., Pima St., and Sycamore Blvd.
- All weather access bus pullouts.
- High-density housing.
- Zoning to support plans.
- Improved lighting.
- Need medians for crossing without affecting businesses.
- Position of bike lanes needs to be examined; should it be different than it is now (Mountain Ave.)
- Need narrower lanes to A) Discourage heavy-duty commercial traffic and B) Preserve bike lanes and sidewalks. This should be completely off the road, like along Aviation Hwy.
- Add one-way streets to and from Grant Rd. with diagonal parking spaces.
- Need drop-off lanes and turn-offs.
- Charge money for travel with electronic toll system, especially during high volume travel time.

Question 6: What do we fear and hope for along Grant Road?

FEARS —

- Low funds — need for improving intersections first.
- Disruption during construction.
- Stores might close.
- Cut-through traffic.
- We will be inadequately compensated for our homes.
- Years of noise and mess from construction and traffic.
- Harm to the value of houses in the area.
- It will look like California!
- Pedestrian crossing on six-lane traffic!
- Displacement of good businesses.
- When will it be completed? It will be inadequate and not solve the problem; we will have to do the project all over again.
- Commercial, fast food chains will take over, which will corporatize the road and its real estate.
- Grant Rd. will become “The Son of Speedway.”
- It will become more of a cross-town freeway than it already is.
- City government is going to push growth as fast as possible and make this project obsolete.

- The money will not be there; skyrocketing costs, short collections (of sales tax?).
- A lot of money will be spent to update the road to meet current demand levels without anticipating increased usage, as soon as the project is completed. (As an example: look at any freeway in the Phoenix metro area). This would be an expensive way to not solve the congestion problem.
- It will become construction row – virtually all traffic flow improvement can be achieved by lower cost and more quickly by enlarging intersections only and building bus pullouts.
- People who live on Grant Rd. fear you will “skimp” on buying right-of-way so that traffic will end up in our front yard and our quality of life and property value will plummet.
- 6 lanes of concrete.
- Increased noise.
- Parking to square footage ratio will drop, making “certificate of occupancy” permits more difficult to obtain through the City.

HOPES –

- Prettier, beautiful.
- Safer.
- That there will be enough money to landscape.
- Minimize the number of property owners that are displaced.
- Take all the property of the property owner if any of it must be taken.
- More efficient ways of moving people from point A to point B.
- Dedicated lanes for various functions.
- Electric, smaller cars.
- Smaller lanes – nobody said how we have to use the lanes.
- Dedicated bike lanes.
- It doesn't have to be business as usual.
- That this won't happen at all.
- Evolve a sense of corridor/city history in the redesign.
- More pedestrians and more cyclists.
- Possible pedestrian overpass and handicap access throughout.
- Vibrant landscape, mixed-use, and flexible zoning.
- Left and right-turn lanes.
- Extend modern streetcar north on Campbell Ave., then east on Grant Rd.
- Enforcing deed restriction for neighborhoods to have residential, not commercial use.
- Make it like Oakland, California (not Speedway Blvd.); i.e. on south side between Tucson Blvd. and Campbell Ave.: residents only, no rentals or businesses.
- Planning the vision of the future of driving becomes un-economic, make room for those plans, example: make plans for future use of utility and phone lines even if we won't use them now.

- Look for more funding now.
- Use of smaller cars (gas will be too expensive).
- Light rail.
- That we could move people, not vehicles/cars that are 95% inefficient.
- There's enough funding to landscape it.

DEBRIEFING/OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

What could be improved?

- Name tags for everyone.
- Keep repeating the questions.
- Get info regarding RTA funding.
- Need more markers.
- Colors got confusing for some.
- Need questions on large sheets of paper.
- For questions in the large group, room facilitator should say, "bring up that question at your table."
- Sense of bystanders, particularly outside was a distraction.
- Need additional room for non-table participants.
- Poor acoustics in the room (two left because of problem with sound.)
- RSVPs were 1/2 of who showed up.

What worked?

- Presence and participation of task force members.
- Time schedule (sticking to it and it was enough time for all questions).
- Enough facilitators (but lacked one recorder because of large turnout and extra table set-up).
- Demonstrated flexibility of the process.
- Good to have participants do the work.
- Facilitator/recorder pairs worked well.
- Light refreshments.
- Got additional input for the additional group table.
- People joined the table conversation.
- Technical assistance from resource people (Dave Perkins and Jim Glock).