



Cortaro Road/Magee Road:
Thornydale Road to Oracle Road
Community Advisory Committee Meeting



Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting
Monday, Oct. 20, 2008
6 – 7:30 p.m.
St. Mark's United Methodist Church

CAC Members Present at Meeting:

- George Ballesteros
- Robert Barr
- Kathy Gatto
- Dennis Hansen
- Steven Kresal
- William Scott
- Steve Sisson
- Tom Unger
- Bernie Wiegandt
- David Williams

CAC Members Not in Attendance:

- Carol Wagoner-Cook
- Kathryn Culver
- Molly Frazer
- David Jacobs
- Louise and/or John Whitehill-Ward

Attending from Project Team:

- EcoPlan: Mike Dawson
- Pima County Department of Transportation (PCDOT): Carol Brichta, John McManus
- AECOM: Bill Schlesinger
- Gordley Design Group: Barb Alley, Angie Brown

Attending from the Public:

See attached sign-in sheets

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- Aug. 4, 2008 Meeting Minutes
- Comment Response Packets
- Noise Analysis

Steve Sisson started the meeting by asking everyone to introduce themselves and whom they represent. Bill Schlesinger, Project Manager, introduced the team members

and Jacqui Andrade from Pima County Supervisor Ann Day's office. He also introduced the artists who were chosen to conduct an art master plan. The artists chosen, Stephen Grede and Nina Borgia-Aberle, stated that they were hired to do a study that would compile what kind of art could be used and where the opportunities may be along the corridor for public art. They feel that public art is community-owned, and they will be looking at other areas nearby and talking to the residents to get a sense of what kind of art they would like to see in the project area. When all of the information has been gathered, they will put it into a master plan and present their findings to the team. After the plan has been completed, the team will announce the search for an artist to carry out the plan.

Q: What is the budget for putting this master plan together?

A: The budget is \$15,000-\$24,000, depending on the length of time needed to come up with the master plan.

Bill stated this meeting was for the CAC and if there was time at the end of the meeting, he would take questions from the public. Bill also stated he would stay after the meeting to answer questions, if necessary.

Steve suggested that Bill give the CAC an opportunity to ask questions before giving the presentation planned for the meeting. Those questions and comments were as follows:

Q: Is there enough roadway built into this project with just four lanes – two lanes in each direction?

A: We did a traffic analysis and put those figures into a model that estimated the traffic counts out to the year 2030, and the numbers only called for a four-lane roadway. There is not a significant amount of growth that will happen in this area to warrant more than four lanes in the next 22 years. The projected number of vehicles per day is 35,000 to the year 2030 and beyond. A four-lane roadway is sufficient for that number of cars.

Comment: But this will put more traffic on other arterial roadways in the area that have more lanes.

Response: We have a limited budget and we feel the design for this roadway is sufficient to 2030 and beyond. Monies used to construct roads that are not necessary will take money away from other needed projects. Also, it takes money for upkeep of a roadway, and if additional lanes not necessary are built, there will be the additional cost for upkeep of a roadway that is not needed.

Q: In 1981-1982 when Ina Road was widened to two lanes with medians, the projection seemed accurate. How close are we today with the projections that were made when that roadway was constructed?

A: We don't have that information, but after being in this area for 30 years, I can assure you that the roadways built have met the model's projections.

Comment: After 25 years, it seems the Ina Road improvements have held the traffic well. Also, it seems that other road improvements in the area have helped to relieve the pressure on Ina Road.

Q: How are the traffic counts being measured – direction of vehicles, access to neighborhoods, etc.? There are some serious issues getting in and out of neighborhoods where there is only one access in and out.

A: The team will send that information out to the CAC members to review.

Comment: As a homeowner on Cortaro Farms Road, I do not want a six-lane freeway going by my home. Each area should maintain its own road. All the roads need to be widened so that all the traffic is not funneled to one arterial street that invades the neighborhoods. Each of the areas should eventually shoulder its own expansion.

Comment: I agree, I do not want a six-lane roadway in front of my house. They would have to take my entire front yard in order to construct six lanes. The quality of life in our neighborhoods should be maintained.

Response: There have never been plans to make this a six-lane roadway.

Steve received a letter from a constituent, and read it to the group. The letter stated that this person would live with the changes that would occur when the roadway changes from two to four lanes; however, none of the four alternatives for the intersection of La Cholla Boulevard and Magee Road were satisfactory and wanted the intersection to stay as is.

Bill said one of the alternatives the team looked at was a “no-build” option, and after careful review, the team felt it was not an option. Also, on the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) ballot, it was written, voted on and approved that the two intersections would be connected. At this point, the only way to change a voter-approved mandate would be to put this intersection back on the ballot to be voted on again.

The CAC received a packet consisting of a cover letter and the team’s responses to all the comments that were received at the public open house. Bill stated that there were 139 present at the open house and 30 comments were received. The team was very pleased with the turnout. The packets would be mailed out to all who received an invitation to the open house within the week.

Bill said there would be a presentation on the noise study this evening. The team would discuss how the study will be completed and what the differences are between County and federal guidelines. Some federal funds will be used on this project, which means the team must follow federal guidelines. The team is aware of the policy discussions with respect to the La Cañada project as it relates to noise walls; however, tonight’s presentation will only deal with the process for the Cortaro Farms Road/Magee Road project.

Another issue to discuss is the consideration of bus pull-outs. Currently, the buses stop on the roadway to pick up children. If there were to be bus pull-outs, the bus would be in a dedicated pull-out, thus resulting in a different use of the stop rules. When a bus stops in the open roadway, those lanes that are not separated by a median must stop, allowing for the safe boarding and dismissing of school children. If a dedicated pullout were to be used, would that be safer than being in the flow of traffic requiring all lanes to stop for the safety of the children? Another issue with bus stops is that the stops may change, making it difficult to know where to put them. These issues are still being discussed.

Q: Do you have any counts from the school district to know how many buses actually stop on this roadway?

A: No, we need to get that information from the schools and get feedback on what the district feels would be safe.

Q: Are there any Sun Tran bus pullouts in the design?

A: We will have to talk with Sun Tran to determine where those stops will be. Sun Tran is a part of the design team moving forward.

Bill asked if there were any other questions that anyone had before he moved forward with where the team is and where they are going. Bill stated that the CAC's next meeting would be at St. Mark's United Methodist Church on Monday, Dec. 1, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. The exact date and location of the public meeting has yet to be determined, but it would be the second week of December. At the public meeting, the team will present the recommended alternative, the result of the noise analysis and details on the drainage.

At the end of 2008, the team is on schedule, and in the process of drafting the Environmental Assessment and Mitigation Report (EAMR) and the Design Concept Report (DCR). The team is at stage two in the plans.

In early 2009, the County will review the documents that will be presented at the public meeting. The County will make comments, and the team will adjust plans accordingly. Once the documents have been revised, the team will come back to the public for a public hearing, wait for public opinion and go before the Pima County Board of Supervisors (BOS) in the fall of 2009. At that time, the CAC will draft and present their letter to the BOS with their recommendations.

With no further questions or comments, Bill moved forward with the presentation. He stated that the designs on the display boards were the same boards that had been presented at the last meeting. A couple of things have changed and Bill shared those changes with the group. First, traffic counts at Jensen Drive were significantly lower than counts that were taken a year ago. The team will continue to monitor that intersection for any increases in traffic. The team will conduct another traffic count next year to do the final determination whether a traffic signal will be warranted as originally determined. If a traffic signal is not warranted at the time of construction, conduit and

pole boxes will be placed to accommodate a signal at a later date at that location. No decision has been made to change the original plans at this time.

There were comments from the CAC members stating that there needs to be a traffic signal at the Jensen Drive/Magee Road intersection. That is a major egress and ingress to the neighborhood and the CAC felt it would be very dangerous to not have a signal at that location.

There was some concern that traffic counts were not taken anywhere but at Jensen Drive. Some of the CAC members asked for traffic counts to be taken at other neighborhood areas along the corridor. The CAC would like to see the team looking at more than just the traffic counts. They would like the team to look at safety.

The CAC and the team discussed the traffic counts in more detail. Bill stated that the team would continue to monitor, as stated earlier, over the next year.

Since the public meeting, there has been a slight change in the median openings. One was moved to Como Drive. If the median opening was not at that location, people would be using inappropriate ways in order to get to Como Drive. After talking to residents of that area, the team decided for safety reasons to relocate that median opening.

At the last CAC meeting, four alternatives for the intersection of La Cholla Boulevard and Magee Road were presented. With input from the CAC and the public from the open house, two alternatives were chosen for further study. The most unpopular alternative of the four options was the Roundabout. The public felt this option would not function well at this location. The other option not chosen was the Flyover, as it would be too costly to construct. The selected alternatives were the Jug-Handle and S-Curve.

At the last CAC meeting, there were a couple alternatives that some members wanted to discuss. One was similar to the flyover. That option would require purchasing additional right-of-way and would be too costly. The other option was an underpass. This is similar to the flyover except it would be built underground. The problem this option posed would be that the Carmack Wash has 5,000 cubic feet per second during a 100-year flood event. That would require a pump in order move the water out so that the underpass could be built. Bill stated that it would cost \$7,500 a foot to put in large culverts and channels, costing in the 10s of millions of dollars to just divert the water away from the roadway with this option. The additional alternatives were very well thought out and Bill thanked the members for taking the time to share their ideas.

The two alternatives that had been chosen to be discussed this evening are the Jug-Handle and the S-Curve. The characteristics are as follows:

- Jug-Handle:
 - Speed limit at 45 miles per hour (mph)
 - Eliminates a 110-degree left turn

- At grade level
- Uncommon to Tucson
- Eliminates right-of-way takes
- Use of open land – large footprint
- S-Curve
 - Speed limit at 45 mph
 - Common intersection configuration; heavy northbound-to-westbound 110-degree turn
 - Right-of-way acquisition on the northwest corner of the intersection – close to the neighborhoods

Both alternatives function fairly well. Although the Jug-Handle is a slightly better solution, both options are acceptable. Bill showed the group where the Carmack Wash is located within the project area and where the drainage areas might be located. The team is still looking into solutions, and the drainage design will move forward once the final alternative is chosen for the intersection.

Q: Will you be incorporating water harvesting in this project? Will one alternative work better with water harvesting?

A: Yes, water harvesting will be utilized in this area. It will not matter which option is chosen; they both will accommodate water harvesting.

The process over the next month will consist of the team meeting to evaluate and rank these alternatives. Bill provided the CAC with copies of preliminary designs of the two alternatives, and then he then provided them with a matrix to record their feedback and recommendation on the alternative they believe would be the best for this intersection.

Each of the criteria mentioned on the matrix is spelled out in the Pima County Community Participation and Mitigation Ordinance. Bill said the team would rate each criterion with zeros, pluses and minuses. What the team is looking for from the CAC are comments on each of the criteria, so the team knows what is important to the CAC and what they believe the impacts of each of the alternatives would be to the residents in the area. The team will review the information obtained from the CAC to help choose the best option. The team will report back in December with more detail on the selected alternative.

Q: What are you specifically asking us to do? Could we get this document e-mailed to us?

A: We are looking for you to comment on the intersection only. We want to hear about historic features, drainage issues you are aware of, what you may like on a particular intersection, etc. Bill stated the document would be e-mailed to the CAC the next day.

There was more discussion to clarify exactly what the team needed from the CAC. Bill went through the maps with the CAC to make sure they understood the information they would be commenting on.

The CAC had some ideas of tweaking the designs. Bill stated that there would be time for those comments after the recommended alternative was chosen. At this time, he only needed the CAC to comment on the two alternatives as they are presented.

Bill introduced Mike Dawson, EcoPlan, to explain what would be involved in the noise analysis and how the noise levels would be gathered and determined with computer modeling out to the year 2030.

Mike stated that the federal and County guidelines for determining noise are very similar. Since federal funding will be used on this project, federal guidelines must be followed. One of the differences between federal and County guidelines is that the County allows for a 3-decibel (dBA) credit with the use of rubberized asphalt; the federal guidelines currently do not allow for this deduction.

Mike gave the CAC members a handout that helped to explain how the noise would be gathered. The only category the CAC needs to be concerned with is the LEQ(h) column. LEQ(h) is a measurement used for roadways; it averages noise over a period of time. The criteria used to determine whether noise mitigation is warranted is if the noise is predicted at, or above, 66 dBA, or if the road widening project would increase the noise by 15 dBA, even if the increase didn't reach 66 dBA.

The noise analysis procedure consists of the following:

- Identify representative noise receptors (intersections, single family residences, different elevations) and take measurements at peak times in both the mornings and the afternoons.
- Traffic Noise Model (TNM) – computing model where the existing data is used; model then computes the current noise level.
- Validate or adjust the model based on field measurements for accuracy.
- Build a model using the projected roadway with the higher vehicle traffic out to the year of 2030.
- Run the model for future conditions.
- Mitigation analysis.

Noise abatement criteria:

- Change must be a 5-dBA decrease in noise.
- Cost of noise abatement must be reasonable; federal regulations do not have a cost specified; however, Pima County requires the cost not to exceed \$35,000 per benefited receiver.
- Majority must rule; 51 percent of those being affected must agree to noise abatement.
- Noise abatement must benefit two or more adjacent receivers.

Q: What about the walls that were built about 12 years ago?

A: Those walls were built for privacy, not noise abatement.

The noise analysis will be taken when the project is at the 15-percent plan stage. An additional model analysis will be taken around the 90 percent plan stage to account for any minor changes that may occur as the plans are nearing completion; making adjustments as needed.

Because this corridor is considered an Environmentally Sensitive Roadway (ESR), the wall height is limited to six feet; however, there could be an exception made up-to the maximum of 10 feet if the need is warranted.

The type of noise abatement must be documented in the EAMR and approved by the Pima County BOS.

The results of the noise analysis will be presented in a few months. Mike stated that if anyone wanted to volunteer their property to house a monitor to let him know. He provided the CAC members with his contact information.

Q: Are there live people taking the noise readings?

A: Yes, there is a real person and they stay at each location for approximately for 15 minutes.

Q: Are they always in the backyard?

A: That is usually where they monitor since most people are outside in their backyards.

Q: Are you monitoring the entire corridor?

A: Yes.

Q: Is the Thornydale Road area considered a sensitive roadway? They have ten-foot walls.

A: No, that stretch of road is not designated as a sensitive roadway.

At the conclusion of the noise discussion, the CAC continued to ask some clarification questions in regard to the maps they were given in order to fill out the matrix for the team.

Questions from the public:

Q: What is the reason for a U-turn at Mona Lisa Drive?

A: A median opening is warranted at that location to eliminate the need to drive to the traffic signal in order to make a U-turn.

Q: Can you level the roadway?

A: Yes, leveling the roadway is in the plans.

Comment: We want bike lanes on the outside.

Response: We will be extending the existing bridge to the south to accommodate bike lanes on the outside.

Q: Will there be a viaduct added between Ina Road and Cortaro Farms Road?

A: That is a concern; however, that will not be done as a part of this project.

Comment: It sounds like what you are proposing is similar to the intersection of Harrison Road and Old Spanish Trail. I would suggest you pull an accident report for that area and keep that in mind as you move forward.

Response: We will take that into consideration.

Q: What will the \$15,000-\$24,000 cost cover for the artists?

A: As stated earlier, the artists hired at this point in the process will only be getting input from the public and will work with the team to come up with a plan. After that point, an artist will then be hired to create the public art.

Q: Why will the bridge extended to the south?

A: The bridge will have two lanes westbound and three lanes eastbound with a 24-foot median. The third lane eastbound will be added storage needed for the right-turn lane just east of the bridge.

Q: Why is a median needed on the bridge?

A: The median on the bridge is needed for left-turns that occur both east and west of the bridge.

Bill took the time to thank everyone for coming and said he would stay longer to answer specific questions.