



CITY OF
TUCSON
DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION

February 28, 2008

Dunbar/Spring Neighborhood Association

RE: Response to Letter Concerning Downtown Links

Dear Neighbors:

Thank you for your letter dated February 20, 2008 (Attachment A-Dunbar/Spring letter dated February 20, 2008) concerning the position of the Dunbar/Spring Neighborhood Association regarding the current alignment concept modification to be considered by the Downtown Links Citizens Advisory Committee. Please be assured that the Tucson Department of Transportation wants to work with the Dunbar/Spring Neighborhood Association on its concerns regarding the modification. I want to use this opportunity to explain why a modification is being proposed, and for you to understand project parameters so that we can work together toward the best possible project.

First, I would like to inform you of a public workshop that will be held to obtain additional public input on the design and roadway elements of the proposed alignment concept modification. The workshop is scheduled for March 11, 2008 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the USA Building, 220 W. Sixth Street.

As you are aware, Downtown Links has a very long history. It is the alternative to the "last mile" of the Barraza-Aviation Parkway, an Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) project that would have extended the current Barraza-Aviation Parkway as a limited access highway through the Historic Warehouse District. The result would have been the permanent loss of virtually the entire Warehouse District, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. The City offered to take the project over from ADOT in 1989, and scores of alternatives have been considered in an open public setting since that time. When Pima County voters approved the Regional Transportation Plan in 2006, it provided a funding source and a public mandate for the City to complete the project as a four-lane urban arterial.

A key goal of the Downtown Links is to create a new city avenue north of the current terminus of the Barraza-Aviation Parkway at Broadway, that connects northward to Sixth Street and on to I-10 via St. Mary's Road. This four-lane arterial roadway will improve vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian access through the area and eliminate the hazardous at-grade railroad crossing located at Sixth Street. In addition, the project will correct drainage problems associated with the Tucson Arroyo, which has been a chronic problem for many property owners and the City for close to 100 years. The project will also result in a comprehensive plan that will guide adjacent land use and private capital improvement decisions throughout this corridor. There has been extensive public input into this land use plan during the past year.

Last year, the Downtown Links CAC selected an alignment concept, which I have attached to this letter (Attachment B-December 2006 alignment). This concept was selected after a number of others were considered. The concept was selected with the

explicit intent that further investigation and refinements would occur, with input provided through the CAC.

Through this process it was discovered that constructing an underpass eight feet from the Steinfeld Warehouse would put that building at risk and prevent it from being reoccupied or renovated until after the completion of construction. Further analysis conducted by HDR, the project consultant, and discussions with the Union Pacific Railroad regarding new railroad requirements subsequently revealed that this alignment would also require the demolition of the Citizen's Warehouse and severely impact the Stone Avenue Underpass. The Tucson Department of Transportation cannot support the destruction of these key historic resources in the Warehouse District.

As a result, we instructed our consultant to examine these new issues and develop a modification to the concept that would avoid impacts to these three key structures in the Historic Tucson Warehouse District. The revised modification calls for shifting the project northward, coming in at grade at Stone Avenue, and moving the underpass northwest of the Steinfeld Warehouse (Attachment C-February 2007 alignment). In addition to avoiding impacts to the Warehouse District buildings and the Stone Avenue Underpass, we were pleased to learn that this alignment shift offers a number of other positive consequences, including lower costs, no impact to Fifth Avenue as a result of the mitigation of the Tucson Arroyo, elimination of the "canyon effect" at the intersection of Stone Avenue, the ability to keep Sixth Street and Stone Avenue open during construction, and the preservation of all contributing structures in the Historic Warehouse District located on Sixth Street.

I would like to provide some additional information and clarification regarding some of the points raised in your letter:

- The other alignments considered by the CAC will be available for review at the upcoming workshop. I'd like to remind you that as a voter-approved RTA project, the final design must contain four lanes and bicycle and pedestrian access.
- We do not believe that the modification isolates Dunbar/Spring any more than the previous alignment. A goal of this and the previous alignment is to provide a strong bicycle and pedestrian connection via Ninth Avenue. That is still the case, and at the workshop we will solicit recommendations for how wide this connection should be and what type of amenities it should offer.
- In the case of necessary property acquisitions, private property owners will be compensated at fair market rates and will be offered full relocation benefits under the requirements of the Federal Standard Uniform Relocation Act. We will work with affected parties and will seek alternative locations that are as close as possible to their existing locations. We will also need to work with the City Council on the broader issue of relocation of those occupying State-owned structures who are not entitled to Standard Uniform Relocation Act benefits. This is of concern to us, and

we need to work together to find a solution that is appropriate for the occupants and taxpayers.

- The proposed modification offers a number of opportunities for new locations for green spaces and other amenities. Your input is essential to the design of these amenities.
- The project has been studied extensively from a traffic data standpoint, and that information is available on the project web-site. I would like to point out that the alignment shift does not result in changed traffic numbers compared with the previous alignment concept.
- Beyond the RTA voter-approved requirements that this facility provide four vehicle travel lanes, sidewalks and bicycle lanes, the ultimate cross section of the underpass remains open to public preferences based upon what we hear at the workshop on March 11th. The Tucson Department of Transportation does not support a six-lane facility through any portion of the Downtown Links project. Our graphic for the underpass has been revised to reflect minimal acceptable widths, however, we do believe that underpass amenities should be subject to further discussion.

I and the entire Downtown Links project team and Citizen Advisory Committee look forward to continuing constructive discussions with all stakeholders to develop a project that is an improvement for the entire community. I encourage you and your neighbors to attend the March 11th workshop to provide your input. Further information is available at www.downtownlinks.info.

Sincerely,



James W. Glock, P.E., Director
Department of Transportation

JWG:mc

Attachments

- c: The Honorable Mayor and Council Members
Mike Hein, City Manager
Karen Masbruch, Assistant City Manager
Gary Hayes, RTA Executive Director
Downtown Links CAC
Historic Commission
Neighborhood Associations:
West University Iron Horse
Barrio Anita Armory Park
El Presidio Pie Allen

ATTACHMENT A – Dunbar/Spring Letter Dated February 20, 2008

February 20, 2008

CC: Governor Janet Napolitano, Pima County Board of Supervisors, Mayor and Council, Tucson Department of Transportation Director Jim Glock, Deputy Director Andrew Singelakis, Downtown Links Citizens Advisory Committee, and the West University, Barrio Anita, El Presidio, Iron Horse, Armory Park, and Pie Allen neighborhood associations.

We the Dunbar/Spring Neighborhood Association hereby submit our position regarding the latest alignment "refinements" brought forward at the January 14th, 2008 Downtown Links Citizens Advisory Committee meeting.

The Dunbar/Spring representative to the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) supported the alignment approved in January 2007 instead of the other alignments because it made use of existing roadways, left key warehouse structures intact and did not reduce connectivity between Dunbar/Spring and downtown.

The three "refinements" brought forward at the January 14th, 2008 meeting DO NOT reflect the same goals as the alignment which was voted on by the CAC in January 2007. We strongly oppose these three "refinements," 3a, 3b and 3c, which closely resemble previous alignments dated from May 2006, specifically B, D, & T, as well as O-2 from June 2006. The committee in fact voted all of these alignments down.

Like many of the previously proposed alignments, the current refinements isolate the Dunbar/Spring neighborhood from downtown and damage important businesses and structures on the south end of our neighborhood. Some of the Dunbar/Spring Neighborhood's greatest assets are the services provided by the artists and businesses within and nearby our neighborhood. We value the community center that the cohesiveness of all of the businesses and arts entities within the 2 blocks from 7th Ave to 9th Ave and 5th Street to 6th Street have created for our neighborhood, and which significantly enhance our quality of life. The present refinements sever this central neighborhood asset from the neighborhood. The new alignment also denies the neighborhood the opportunity to develop a multi-use "railroad" park, which has had years of collaborative planning and projected funding, in the present open lot at the northwest corner of 9th Ave. and 6th Street (across from the Citizen's Warehouse). Moreover, the new alignments undermine traditional and well-established foot and bicycle paths that connect Dunbar/Spring to downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

We recognize the challenges that the City of Tucson Department of Transportation is facing regarding the requirements set by Union Pacific Railroad and the public need for preserving the Steinfeld and Citizens warehouses. Yet, we feel that backpedaling to previously rejected proposals rather than taking a hard look at compromises that could be made in the scope and width of the roadway was the wrong way to go. Furthermore, the width of the refinements cause concern for our neighborhood, especially since they insinuate future widening of the facility, which could cause greater isolation.

If the CAC must abandon the January 2007 approved alignment, then let all of the previously considered alignments be discussed. We encourage the DLCAC to examine how the roadway could serve as a decked underpass that would retain current pedestrian and bicycle connections as well as provide land for neighborhood enhancing development. Moreover, we would like to see the displaced and interrupted businesses retained and situated (or even rebuilt) on the "decked" area OR guaranteed relocation within the Arts District and given assistance to relocate. As one of the most highly impacted neighborhoods by this roadway, the Dunbar/Spring neighborhood would like to see much more deliberation over these "refinements" since they differ so greatly from the originally approved alignment.

We feel that more public meetings are necessary to present the revised alignments and discuss the impetus for these changes. In addition, we feel strongly that traffic study information must be presented for all of the proposed alignments before such alignments come to a vote. The public, affected by the roadway changes, deserves to clearly understand the direction that this process has taken and why things are changing in this direction.

Lastly, we request that the meeting minutes from the November 2007 meeting between City of Tucson Department of Transportation and the Union Pacific Railroad be made public, and available to not only members of the CAC, but also to our neighborhood.

Thank you for considering our requests.

The Dunbar/Spring Neighborhood Association