



Tanque Verde Road:
Catalina Highway to Houghton Road
Community Advisory Committee Meeting



Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting
Thursday, May 1, 2008
6 to 7:30 p.m.
Kirk Bear Canyon Library

CAC Members Present at Meeting:

- Clifford Fortunato
- Margaret Fowler
- Fred Fruchthendler
- Robert Garvin
- Ronald Robinette
- Mel Silverman
- Mike Sturgis

CAC Members Not in Attendance:

- Suzanna Startt

Attending from Project Team:

- Pima County Department of Transportation (PCDOT): Nancy Cole, Rick Ellis, Bob Lutgendorf, John McManus, Tom Nunn
- PinnacleOne: Susan Atwood, Steve Playford, Darrell Playford
- Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) – Mainstreet Program: Britton Dornquast
- RS Engineering: Mike Holder, Jerry Pelland, Bob Suarez, Greg Vega
- DMJM Harris: Felipe Ladron de Guevara, Charlene Robinson
- Projects International, Inc.: Jim Portner
- Gordley Design Group: Barb Alley, Arizeder Urreiztieta

Materials Distributed:

- CAC meeting agenda
- Comment form
- Preliminary comment summary from public meeting
- Meeting schedule and agenda for discussing past CAC issues
- Initial Traffic Report
- RTA booklets

Steve Playford, PCDOT Project Manager, PinnacleOne, thanked everyone for taking the time to come to the meeting. Steve stated that Bob Suarez, RS Engineering, would be presenting the Initial Traffic Report. Steve told the CAC that the Initial Traffic Report Summary was e-mailed to all of the CAC members on Tuesday, April 29. He then told the members that in the CAC member's packet they received at the beginning of the meeting was a summary of the Traffic Report containing current, future and proposed information. The team also provided maps that Bob would be referring to during his presentation. Steve stated that the initial Traffic Report Summary the members received was the preliminary report and changes to the report would be made as it goes through the approval and proofing

process to ensure the team gets an accurate report. The purpose of presenting the information to the group this evening would be to let the members get a feel for options that the team is reviewing for the project area and getting feedback from the CAC.

Steve stated that this meeting was strictly for the CAC members, and although the public is welcome to attend the CAC meetings, the meetings are designed for the committee to complete its work. At the conclusion of the CAC meeting, the team would take questions from the public. Jim Portner, Projects International, Inc., let the CAC members know that there would not be information presented at a public meeting that was not presented to the CAC members beforehand. There was some discussion about the postcard invitation and the members felt most of their neighbors received them. He also let the members know they should have received the invitation by e-mail as well as the mailed version. Steve also let the group know that the notice appeared in the newspaper. At that time, the floor was turned over to Arizeder Urreiztieta, Gordley Design Group, to give his presentation on the public meeting that was held on April 24.

Arizeder shared some of the statistics from the meeting. He stated that there were 92 people who signed in at the public meeting. Seventy-one were from the public, 15 from the team, four were CAC members and there were two elected officials who attended. Arizeder stated that there could be up to two more CAC meetings and there would be at least one more public meeting that has yet to be scheduled. It will depend on how the CAC process is moving forward. Arizeder also mentioned that the team did an impromptu Q-and-A session at the public meeting as a result of the large turnout. That format seemed to work well, but if that format were used again, each member of the public would be limited to one question each, giving everyone a chance to have his or her question or comment heard.

A comment was brought up by a CAC member about the number of questions and concerns at the public meeting about noise walls, and what would be different about the study today from the original study done in 2003 by Westland Resources. In 2003, an addendum to the noise report was written incorporating the use of rubberized asphalt. This year, the noise model was rerun using the updated traffic data provided by RS Engineering and Pima Association of Governments (PAG) data. Westland Resources has been authorized to collect new ground data at selected receptor points adjacent to the roadway. This information is used to calibrate the model, which is then applied to the length of the roadway and is unlikely to affect the results of the model.

Arizeder introduced Jim, who gave a brief introduction to Bob's presentation. He referred the members back to the packet that was mentioned at the beginning of the meeting and turned the floor over to Bob. Bob let the members know that they each received a copy of the public's comments and they could read over those at their leisure. He also stated the comments repeated themselves in regards to noise, access to certain streets, turn lanes and wildlife factors to mention a few. Most of the issues on the comment forms are issues already being addressed. Arizeder took a moment to inform the group that after a public meeting, the public can send comments in up to two weeks after the meeting to be reviewed by the team. The comment summary that was presented to the CAC members would be available for the public to view on the project Web site.

Bob went through the packet that was provided to each CAC member. The first page discussed was the Initial Traffic Report with the following information. The purpose of the report was to evaluate existing conditions and provide recommendations for improvements out to the design year 2030. The existing conditions state the roadway is 1.6 miles in length and is designated as a scenic route. The two signalized

intersections, one at Catalina Highway and the other one at Houghton Road, for the 13,500 vehicles per day (vpd), meet the roadway standard. Tanque Verde Road is currently a three/two lane roadway with a posted speed limit of 45 mph with comparable crash rates to other arterials in Tucson.

The future conditions for the year 2030 are estimated at 24,000 vpd, but are currently being evaluated as a result of the widening project on Houghton Road to Tanque Verde Road. Improvements to the Houghton Road/Tanque Verde Road intersection are being coordinated with the City of Tucson, as its improvement project on Houghton Road has been extended to include that intersection. Bob stated there would most likely be temporary improvements to that intersection during the Tanque Verde Road widening project. Signal requirements for Lake Vista Drive will be met by 2030; no signal is required at this time. The proposed improvements consist of a four-lane divided roadway with a paved shoulder, sidewalks, an equestrian path and interim improvements at the Houghton Road/Tanque Verde Road intersection.

There was some discussion regarding a traffic signal at Lake Vista Drive. The issue was the possible increase in traffic on Tanque Verde Road once the widening of Houghton Road would be complete, and what the increase of traffic would be as a result of those improvements. In order for the residents of The Lakes of Castle Rock to exit their neighborhood if the traffic volume increases, a light may be warranted at that location. The current growth rate used in the Initial Traffic Report was two percent. That figure is currently being evaluated and the result of any change in estimated traffic volumes could have an impact on the need for a traffic signal at Lake Vista Drive. It was stated that if the projected increase in traffic volume warrants a traffic signal at that location prior to the year 2030, a light would be installed during construction. Charlene Robinson, DMJM Harris and Tom Nunn, Pima County Department of Transportation, aided in this discussion regarding the traffic signal.

Bob had the members take a look at their CAC issues outline and stated what he would be addressing in his presentation on the traffic report as it related to their concerns. Bob informed the group that he would like to adjust the order of the topics listed on the agenda so that he could devote more time to the median opening part of his presentation.

Bob started out by showing the map of the gated entrance to The Lakes of Castle Rock at north Castle Rock Drive. Bob explained that there would be temporary construction easements issued and concerns being looked at in this area are U-turns and the length of the storage lanes for the vehicles accessing the neighborhood. The team's main concern is to make sure the flow of traffic is not interrupted on Tanque Verde Road as vehicles turn in and out of these areas.

The next area mentioned was the Lake Vista Drive gated entrance. This area should not need to change much except for a possible temporary construction easement and a turn lane if a traffic light is installed at that location.

The entrance onto Powder Horn Drive will be more challenging. Currently, vehicles that don't intend to go into the neighborhood can go around the keypad in order to exit back onto Tanque Verde Road. With the proposed plan, the keypad would need to be moved back eliminating the option of U-turning out of the neighborhood. This area would require close work with the homeowners' association moving forward. Bob wanted the group to know the team was aware of the problems with this area of the project.

The next topic Bob discussed was construction access. Bob let the group know the County has a plan laid out for every construction project, which includes prior approval needed for detours and partial closings, off-duty police officers to direct traffic as necessary, no lane restrictions between the hours of 7 to 9 a.m. and 4 to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, prior approval needed for any road closures or lane restrictions and proper signage for safe driving through the construction area. Business access must also be maintained 24 hours a day seven days a week on a paved surface and a 24-hour notice given to a business if access needs to be restricted, and it must be restored within an eight-hour period. The contractor will provide business access signage, and businesses are allowed to display “A” frames in front of their business within their right-of-way during construction.

A question was asked regarding how far in advance people in the area would be notified that construction would be starting. Tom stated that the first visible sign would be activity by the utility companies in the area, relocating their lines that may interfere with the widening process. Once people start to see utility companies in the area, they can expect construction to start three to four months after that time. There is a public participation process involved in notifying the public when the start time has been identified, and Tom stated that time frame for public notification would be approximately three or four weeks prior to the start of construction.

A question was asked about utilities and whether they would be relocated underground due to Tanque Verde Road being designated as a scenic route, and if they were moved underground, who would pay for that work. Steve stated that the subject of utilities would be discussed at the June 5 CAC meeting.

The next item discussed was the bike lanes. The City of Tucson and Pima County will be meeting on Tuesday, May 6, to talk about the width of the bike lanes. There is no resolution at this point. The County standard consists of a six-foot bike lane. The issue with the six-foot lane is it may not be considered wide enough to be safe. Making the lane wider could possibly give people the idea that it is wide enough to drive on and use as a lane. The team will have more information after next week’s meeting between the City and the County to report on at the next CAC meeting.

Next on the agenda was the issue of sidewalks. Bob said he did not see any problems with the sidewalks and they would be Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) approved. There is already a partial sidewalk on the north side of Tanque Verde Road, and there would be a sidewalk added the entire length of the project area on the south side of Tanque Verde Road.

The equestrian trail will be on the north side of Tanque Verde Road. There was discussion about where there might be a safe horse crossing. An underground crossing is not feasible. The team is looking at a horse crossing at Bonanza Avenue.

Public transportation does not come this far east, therefore eliminating the need for bus pullouts. There was some discussion regarding school bus stops and turn-arounds. Those issues are being looked at along side of the median opening research.

The final topic discussed was media openings. Bob stated that the layouts and options he would be showing were only conceptual designs, meaning they had not been analyzed or studied by the engineering firm. The teams start by putting ideas and thoughts down on paper first. The team will then discuss what may or may not work, then the best options will be studied to ensure the preferred option is feasible, and make necessary changes relating to utilities, traffic, business access, etc.

The conceptual designs brought to the CAC meeting were designs that first consisted of the current status of the roadway, then an alternative option, or options, that included some proposed changes. The members each had a chance to state which designs they thought may or may not work well.

The first layout shown was the stretch of road from Catalina Highway to just west of the second commercial opening (at the Blockbuster Video store). The first layout, labeled Exhibit 01, was of the current conditions. There were three additional options shown to the CAC labeled 01A, 01B, and 01C. Each map had pros, cons, and the team noted all comments from the members.

The second layout was of the section from the commercial opening (at the Blockbuster Video store) to just west of Powder Horn Drive. That layout of the current conditions was labeled Exhibit 02 and one option that was presented was labeled 02A. A concern was brought up about a possible median in front of Fortunato's Plaza and the difficulty vehicles would have accessing that business if a median were to be added at that location. Bob reiterated at that point in the presentation that all exhibits being presented were just options at this point in the planning stage. There were also questions and concerns about legal access to the public storage drive that attracts drivers coming in and out of the east side of the commercial shopping center.

The third layout was the section from just east of Powder Horn Drive to Woods Place. This was labeled Exhibit 03. There was one additional option presented that was labeled 03A. Bob again stated this was a conceptual design, but thought this option 03A met the needs of those residents needing easy access to Tomahawk Trail.

The fourth and final layout was Exhibit 04. This area was from east of north Castle Rock Drive and west of Powder Horn Drive. Exhibit 04A consisted of an equestrian crossing at Bonanza Avenue. This option was to provide a crossing for the horses to get from one side to the other. The concern was how safe that crossing would be in a high-speed area. It was suggested the horses cross at the light at Tanque Verde Road and Houghton Road. Bob stated that these concepts were still being evaluated at this time. Another concern brought up with the horse crossing had to do with noise. If the cars would have to stop and start up again, it would be similar to a stoplight, which would add to the noise level. It was stated that the team did not know if the noise level would be similar to a stoplight. That information would have to be evaluated.

It was asked if anyone knew of a horse crossing like the example being shown tonight. It was stated that there was one at Orange Grove Road between La Cañada Drive and La Cholla Boulevard. That crossing does not have a signal, and with the addition of development in the area, the crossing is no longer warranted, Jerry Pelland, RS Engineering, said.

Bob stated he was finished with his presentation. He stated the team would continue working on the designs in order to come up with their recommendations from all the comments and concerns of the CAC in addition to making sure they are feasible from an engineering standpoint. It was stated that the team would come back to the CAC and tell them the options that are available, and it would be up to the members to agree, or not agree, to the proposed plan. The hope is that by working together, by the time the Environmental Assessment and Mitigation Report (EAMR) is written and presented to the Board of Supervisors (BOS), everyone is in agreement as to the option that is best suited for this improvement project.

(For a view of the media opening layouts that were presented at the CAC meeting, please go to the project Web site located at www.roadprojects.pima.gov/tanqueCathough/.)

Steve told the members that the comments from the public meeting would be added to the Web site and Barb Alley, Gordley Design Group, stated that if additional comments came in from the public, those would be added and an updated document would be e-mailed to the CAC members.

Questions, answers, suggestions and concerns:

There was a concern regarding horse property located on Bonanza Avenue. There are large horse trailers, hauling four to six horses that go in and out of that street. People from all over the City of Tucson use Bonanza Avenue to access the wash to ride their horses. It was suggested that there be no medians in that immediate area so that the trailers could get in and out of that area. It was also suggested that there be no crossing at Bonanza Avenue. The concern was the high speed of traffic and the danger it would pose for horses or pedestrians crossing at that location. It was also mentioned that there should be no median in front of Fortunato's Plaza. The concern was for the loss of potential business due to not being able to access the strip center easily.

There were issues discussed regarding the elevation of the road in relationship to the homes that back up to Tanque Verde Road at The Lakes of Castle Rock.

A member of the public offered to allow the consultant doing the noise study to use his property for monitoring.

A member of the public wanted to see the deceleration lanes remain. It was stated the lanes were in place initially to get those turning onto neighborhood streets out of the flow of traffic; however, with two lanes, that shouldn't be a problem. The team stated they would look at that issue.

Another comment was made that there are school buses that stop on Tanque Verde Road, and the group wanted to make sure there was a safe place for the buses to stop and not put students in danger.

It was also mentioned that there are currently conversations regarding additional commercial property going in next to Blockbuster. The public asked the team to look at the storage capacity on Tanque Verde Road at that location due to a possible increase of traffic at that location.

A member of the public stated that with Placita Lydia being on the curve of Tanque Verde Road, it is extremely difficult and dangerous to turn off that street onto Tanque Verde Road heading west. It was also stated that there are several people that live at that location who have large trailers. With a median in that location, the question was asked whether those with trailers would have to go onto Catalina Highway to Houghton Road heading south, then turning back west in order to access Placita Lydia. It was also mentioned that the property on the northwest corner of Tanque Verde Road and Placita Lydia is now a retirement home where ambulances must enter and exit the facility off Placita Lydia. It was proposed that there be a break in the median in order for the trailers and emergency vehicles to have easy access to that street. It was also mentioned that there is now a church on Placita Lydia, which brings more traffic in and out of that location. The team stated that this area was being looked at and that this issue had come up in the past.

A question was asked regarding walls and whether walls would be installed for privacy if the road were to come to close to a property. The team stated that would be a County issue and the team would be responsible for going to the County with issues like this one.

When will the plans be finalized? They are finalized when the BOS approves the EAMR, which should be about November or December of this year. The main focus of the CAC is to gather information and write their recommendation letter to the BOS. Once the recommendation is approved, there may be minor tweaking needed, but the team will move forward with the approved plans.

Another concern brought up was that if there were medians along Tanque Verde Road, there would need to be left-turn lanes at every median opening.

Bob wanted to remind everyone that the purpose of the CAC meetings would be to get input on constructing a safe and controlled roadway. Not everyone will be able to have what they want, but whatever is decided on must represent a safe roadway for both the residents and traveling public.

It was brought up that Tanque Verde Road between Catalina Highway and Houghton Road is not a high-crash area and it was suggested that raised medians be eliminated throughout the project area. It was stated that this is a rural area and it is preferred that this area remain as close to its original state as possible. People had moved out here for a reason and the residents want the area to stay in its rural state.

A member of the public noted that the area on Tanque Verde Road just west of Catalina Highway had medians installed and the commercial business on that northwest corner had not been viable due to the difficulty in accessing the property due to the medians. A CAC member mentioned that part of the problem with that strip mall was a leasing issue due to the commercial property across the street, not necessarily the installment of the medians along that stretch of road.

Steve stated that the next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, June 5.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.