

Downtown Links Public Meeting, May 12, 2008
questions and comments from the podium and comment cards

Alignment options questions and comments

Robert Reddy/Dunbar Spring business owner. The alignment is about 100 ft from my building and I'm concerned about the stability. Also we would like to see some visuals of how the road will look. I don't believe that the roads will be that narrow.

Terrence McMahon read from his note on alignment modifications. The shoofly and increased overhead clearance were two reasons given to modify the Dec 2006 alignment to the Jan 3D modification. He feels that a 35 MPH, four lane road could be built as a below grade crossing in its present location between Stone & Church. Substantial savings would be realized with this plan: eliminating the 7th Ave to Stone Ave excavation and the existing Arroyo storm drains would remain intact. He feels that the use of RTA funds for drainage improvements is questionable.

Glenn Lyons/Downtown Tucson Partnership. The current alignment doesn't involve an overpass and traffic travels at 30 miles per hour. Feels that at 33 ft high overpass will divide a community and the preferred alignment will not.

Karen Greene/Dunbar Spring resident. Consider an overpass option – it will not demolish as many buildings or create a canyon effect, dividing neighborhoods. I was told by TDOT that citizens would never go for an overpass. An overpass is a cheaper option.

Lisa Zander/Dunbar Spring resident/BICAS Board. Alignment will destroy sense of place and destroy BICAS.

Erik Ryberg/attorney for BICAS. BICAS opposes the 3D alignment in the strongest terms. The proposed alignment destroys connectivity among Dunbar Spring, BICAS, downtown, the U of A, and other neighborhoods.

Mike Burns. The alignment will wipe out my building, built in 1910. I've improved my building and haven't asked for government money.

Beth Sanders. Tim Hagyard. The (sunken) roadway will isolate our neighborhood.

Dwight Metzger. Heather Gross. The alignment will be destructive and isolating to neighborhoods. Look at the Lost Barrio neighborhood – it took 10 years to build the Basket Bridge that connects the neighborhood with downtown. A 'sunken' roadway does affect neighborhoods – the Lost Barrio was cut off for 10 years and now two bridges won't help it be connected to the community.

Rachael Chase/Dunbar Spring. Why are we spending money on roads and an unsustainable lifestyle? I ride my bicycle everywhere. 35 MPH on Speedway is dangerous to cyclists and will be dangerous here in our neighborhood.

Beth Sanders. The current alignment proposed will hinder bike and foot traffic in the downtown area.

Ian Fritz/Dunbar Spring NA President. Take another look at the 'thread the needle' alignment plan. Explore alternatives to this 3D alignment.

Matt Brown/Williams & Dame. Explained why he believes that the Downtown Links project should happen. Stand on Congress St at 5pm and see that we already have a major highway: Congress and Broadway. We need a Downtown Links alignment to alleviate traffic, create a no whistle zone, and solve drainage issues. Just not this alignment option 3D.

Matt Brown/Williams & Dame. Please have the CAC consider the Williams & Dame Development alternatives, especially an overpass option. An overpass alignment option staying on the 6th Ave alignment has some considerations: it would be 33 ft high; it would require a grade separation intersection at Stone, requiring a vote; adjacent uses may be impacted.

Nicole Koch/Dunbar Spring. The City needs to consider alignment options that won't create social and economic divisions among neighborhoods.

Nicole Koch/Dunbar Spring. Explore overpass option.

Toby Fraser. I don't want a highway through my neighborhood. This is gentrification.

De Vie/BICAS supporter. We need to find ways to get more bikes out there.

Sonya Dee/Dunbar Spring resident. Are any alignment decisions related to nearby private development on Stone Ave?

Comment Cards:

* Downtown Links will be destructive to average downtown residents, especially those who use alternative transportation to cars, those who are artists and have studios in the current target area, as well as low income residents affected by the rising costs associated with the commercial plans for Downtown Links.

* The new plan seems to substitute destruction of buildings along 6th for isolation of buildings along Toole. Is not isolation preferable to destruction?

* Very informative meeting – thank you for hosting the event.

* There are more options out there to look at that don't destroy historic buildings and arts centers and even create new spaces. You are tearing out the heart of the Dunbar Spring neighborhood with this new alignment.

* The Downtown Links roadway is destructive, gluttonous, and unnecessary! It is not beneficial to the communities it will displace. We know from the history of roadways that it will not decrease traffic, it will increase it. If you want a drainage system, a roadway is not needed to make that a reality. It would benefit people in the foothills while significantly harming communities in which the roadway exists. We need more public transit systems!

* This roadway will increase traffic and congest our streets. As a resident of Dunbar Spring I have a vested interest in supporting public transportation and bike/foot travel. There are many people who rely on alternate modes of transportation here in the

audience. The amount of money spent on roadways in this tightening economy is shameful, especially when cost/benefit is pitiful at best.

* I use 6th Street to connect to the freeway most days of the week. I think such a tremendous expenditure to change the present is dumb and a poor use of public money.

* Has the design committee looked at any similar projects in other cities and studied what impact sunken roadway may have had when it comes to connectivity between neighborhoods and downtown. What options will displaced businesses be offered?

* I am in favor of the 6th St segment alignment – it seems to be the one that mitigates most issues. We need to be certain to care for the aesthetics of this project as it moves forward. We need to move onto the design phase VERY SOON!

* This road will cut historic downtown neighborhoods off from easy access to downtown and is a key element in out pricing families and long term residents. Residents of Dunbar Spring, Barrio Anita and West University don't want to see this road bring more traffic, pollution and less neighborhood connectivity to our homes.

* How do the plans to utilize Main St as an access point to downtown affect the expected southbound Stone traffic into Downtown?

* .How will this plan help unite the downtown shopping district and Stone Avenue, Sixth Ave and 4th Avenue Shopping districts with Downtown and each other?

* This plan sucks! Go back to the one WE approved.

* Two movies: Who Framed Roger Rabbit and The Hey Arnold Movie.

* This alignment is for rich people. No one in Dunbar Spring needs a highway to get to downtown; it's an 8 minute bike ride. Who needs to go to downtown by car? People in the outskirts. The foothills. No ones favorite part of town is a 4-lane highway. Cyclists die from a 35 MPH car collision. We need less pollution and less traffic, so let's build something that directly supports people who don't own cars. Tucson can be innovative.

* The overpass saves connections, makes shade, gets rid of a shoofly, and costs 1/3 less. CC I do not want a highway in my neighborhood. I deserve to live in a place that doesn't put profit before people. There hasn't been a neighborhood that has benefited people with a HIGHWAY! We are more than consumers who just want to spend. We need more services, not roads. NO ROAD! More public transportation.

* Alignment 3D seems to be the best option. Let's move on this and not waste more time monkey on bickering over details!

* With the current plans, you are carving out a major section of Dunbar Spring's soul or character. The neighborhood is full of artists, environmental activists and other activist most of whom moved here because of this core. If Originate, Lucky Street Studios, Mat Bevel and other businesses are destroyed, you are removing a portion of an identity. So many people will be displaced – this is more important than you are aware. Where else in Tucson is there an artists' community? It is important to keep this community intact. This community draws many many people to Tucson. What are you thinking will happen to the

arts in Tucson? You are also isolating BICAS and putting children at risk – the doorway of BICAS will be at the railroad tracks. Very dangerous.

* Perhaps as a new resident in the area in question, my views are a bit naïve. There have been many heartfelt compassionate outcries from the community that might be dismissed as ‘radical hippies’ or whatever. My comment is only this: these are the people we are the people who care about this. Are the people who voted to build this road in the first place even going to be here to reap the benefits of the road? I also agree it is terribly irresponsible to perpetuate over growing/modernizing/overpopulating/resource depleting. I moved to Tucson and plan on staying in Tucson too. I can also confidently speak for a large number who feel the same way. Please delay the vote. Please hear the people who live, work, enjoy the affected areas in their overwhelming opposition. Please review the options, including the option to can the project. Please don’t ruin BICAS.

* I vote to use the proposed roadway improvement dollars to purchase several hundred electric bicycles for those who would use them.

Process-related questions and comments

Lisa Zander/BICAS Board/Dunbar Spring resident. De Vie. Why is this roadway even being built especially given global warming?

Mark Berman/Benjamin Supply. I’ve been involved with the design for over 20 years. It’s taken 20 years to come to a design. Changes were made to the alignment plan in Jan 2008 based on Union Pacific RR’s standards – why have we waited so long to bring the RR into the process? We have to go back to the drawing board.

Dwight Metzger. We’ve spent years coming to an agreement on an alignment and now the RR gets involved. There has been no open forum since then for the public to comment on the 3D changes.

Jim Glock. Spoke to timing issue: The funding is available immediately through the RTA for all aspects of the Downtown Links, including the drainage mitigation, connectivity, rainwater harvesting and the roadway. In other words, it won’t be like the Basket Bridge, built 10 years after the roadway. And the Downtown Links drainage improvements affect the timing of the Modern Streetcar project.

Robert Reddy/Dunbar Spring business owner. How many public meetings did we have to get to consensus on Dec 2006 alignment decision -- Six? This is the first public comment meeting for the new alignment design 3D. Why are we rushing?

Beth Sanders. Nicole Koch. Casey Hayden. Cherie Amour Pittman. There has to be a more transparent process and more time to comment.

Sonya Dee/Dunbar Spring resident. We went through a process and decided on an alignment. Now this new 3D alignment process is a sham. If you vote on this, there will be deep resentment.

Erik Ryberg/attorney for BICAS. The process has not been transparent. Until Jan we had an alignment that was a result of years of work with communities. That alignment was discarded in secret. We need to give the public a fair shake.

Diana Rhodes/representing CM Romero. Requested that the CAC not vote on the alignment on May 12 and carefully consider public input.

Glenn Lyons/Downtown Tucson Partnership. The decision to build the road and fund it was made a long time ago – what needs to be decided now is the route, refining the design, the infill development, and affordable housing.

Susan Hitzler/Tucson Community. Have you talked with Davis Elementary?

Susan Hitzler/Tucson Community. Has the Modern Streetcar plan been considered along with Downtown Links construction?

Cherie Amour Pittman. Why do we have to build over everything – like Phoenix?

Chuck Bressi/Pres of Armory Park Assoc/business owner/treasurer of Iron Horse. Thanked CAC for their work. This has been in the works for 20 years. This is an RTA project that will happen one way or another. The 3D saves money and solves a water drainage issue. We need to move onto the design phase.

Tim Hagyard. Concern that CAC's push for an alignment decision is driven by making something happen, the pressure for making Rio Nuevo happen. Why do we need to decide this all of a sudden?

Jo Edmondson/BICAS. The younger generation will be paying for this alignment.

Natasha Winnik/Dunbar Spring. Like the Tucson Convention Center, the Downtown Links is another example of destroying neighborhoods in the guise of urban renewal. A road through the heart of Downtown – Downtown Links – will separate neighborhoods and not revitalize it.

Beth Sanders. Give the Dunbar Spring neighborhood more time to process and be a part of the alignment discussion.

Mike Burns. Robert Reddy. How long has this current Citizen Advisory Committee been involved? If you're tired step down.

Oskar Pawpaw. Dunbar Spring resident. Will the highway wipe out the community garden?

Comment Cards:

* Why was the original alignment approved in Dec 2006 changed in Jan 2008 without public input? And with improvements to 22nd Ave, I-10 expansion and already giant Speedway Ave, is more construction necessary for more fluid traffic movement downtown?

* The Matt Bevel Institute has brought visionary arts to downtown for 12 yrs. Now we are embarking on a new vision for the community, Bevelvision, internet television. It would be a shame to lose this in Tucson.

* As a Dunbar Spring resident I am appalled in the change in the Downtown Links since this January. Alternatives have not been referred to the neighborhood except at a contentious neighborhood meeting. The overpass plan should be reconsidered – it seems to have the best alternative for our neighborhood and downtown access. This plan must be reconsidered.

* I am concerned that the RTA project is headed towards wide roads and vehicular transportation. I understand that this plan was drafted in the past when gas was cheaper. Is there any room for developing light rail, improving the SunTran bus reliability, and adding more public transportation in general? Maybe a zipcar program?

* This project is destructive to the downtown community especially the barrios, such as Barrio Anita. Historically the barrios because the people who live there are generally poor have been sent to the back of the bus. We must think this over very carefully since whatever we do; it is going to affect Downtown Tucson for generations.

* I strongly oppose this alignment for many reasons including: lack of forward-thinking design, the tremendous negative impact it will have to the area, its de-emphasis upon bike/pedestrian and public transport, and disconnect it will impose between neighborhoods and downtown. Also, I have grave concerns about the process used to eliminate all other proposals. It flies in the face of democracy to push through approval tonight.

* No regular citizens want this project, especially the current city proposed alignment. For this reason alone, more study (at least) is needed. It is unclear what the requirements of the RTA are for this project...especially whether it even needs to be like the current alignment that is proposed. We need to look to other alternatives and to no alternative. There is no mandate.

* Why is the rail streetcar not headed west rather than a (useless) link? RTA funds were voted for –was this link part of that? Why, when Rio Nuevo is supposedly trying to get people downtown, is a link created to get people to the periphery of Tucson? Money for transportation should be spent for mass transit or road improvements! Rethink.

* How do you measure the 'worth' or 'historic value' of a building or community? Why is a third train track more important than a vibrant community (Dunbar Spring, BICAS) that has deep historic roots and value to Tucson? It seems that the pressures of Union Pacific are more important to this committee in developing the alignment than the needs & desires of the people who actually live here. I urge you to rethink this alignment and the real motivation behind it.

* Delay the vote and rethink going through Dunbar Spring.

* Make the overpass the gateway to the Warehouse Arts District and the Downtown Core. Use the dollar saving for projects.

* We have taken so many years to build up a safe, close knit community. This project is coming along too quickly and not taking into consideration the people of the area. If you

want to ensure the safety of youth in the area and keep the unique culture of Tucson, you will take more time in planning development in this area. Stop thinking of roadways for cars and start thinking about developing a better mass transit system & safer walkways, bike lanes through downtown.

Warehouse District questions and comments

Paul Schwam. Two issues: 1) Have historic structures been considered & inventoried given the new alignment options being proposed? 2) concern about long term solution with railroad shoofly and six RR crossings in a mile.

Demion Clinco. Thanked CAC for commitment to historic resources. I'm for finding solutions that will avoid principal structures. Have historic structures been considered & inventoried given the new alignment options being proposed? Are we compromising historic district status with this alignment? Where is SHPO (state historic preservation office) on these alignments? Would the overpass compromise the district?

Sue Johnson/Dunbar Spring resident. Proposed alignment will demolish living space for Warehouse District artists – where will the displaced artists live? What will happen to the community of artists?

Comment Cards:

CC. Have the economic benefits of historic and arts district tourism been considered?
CC. Has an evaluation been done and has SHPO commented on if these changes – specifically the alignment of 6th St and 6th Ave overpass) are so significant that it causes the Warehouse District to be de-listed as a historic district? 2) Can the bike path along 7th be moved so both the Small Planet Bakery and the Art Deco Warehouse are saved? 3) Has 7th Ave to 5th St alignment been considered since it saves the overall integrity and historic fabric of Dunbar and the Warehouse District?

Downtown Merchants/Responders questions and comments

Chris Early/The Tucson Downtown Merchants Council supports the proposed alignment modification 3D and believes that change is critical to the survival of the downtown economic base. Specific reasons for support: 1) this is a Downtown approach rather than a through downtown approach; 2) the alignment is consistent to the Warehouse Master Plan recommendation 3) Construction can be completed without closing 6th Ave and Stone Ave 4) historic buildings are protected and still allows for new development 5) moves land from flood zone 6) on-going debate about the alignment will delay drainage improvements needed to proceed on the Modern Streetcar maintenance facility.

David Mann/Tucson Fire Department. Fire Station 1 supports this current plan because 6th and Stone will be open during construction is important to first responders like police, fire, and emergency medical. This plan also helps with gravity drainage and will help us respond north of downtown.

Freeway/traffic questions

James Roark/Southside Business Owner/BICAS member. This is a highway/freeway that will move traffic quickly through downtown and hurt downtown merchant business. There

are better ways to move traffic through downtown. People are buying land and buildings and benefiting from the alignment route.

Patty Anderson/Dunbar Spring. This is a bypass freeway that will move cars quickly from Vail AZ through our neighborhood. Cars and people won't be coming to downtown – they will be moving through it. Why not improve 22nd and make this a nice small roadway? The Downtown Links project that the voters approved will be a four-lane roadway with 30 MPH speed limit, bike paths, pedestrian sidewalks, landscaping, underpasses and railroad crossings.

Water harvesting comments and questions

Susan Hitzler/Tucson Community. Has rainwater harvesting been considered in the Downtown Links plan?

Comment Card: Will there be cisterns to catch and re-use water from culverts, i.e. water harvesting?

Drainage comments and questions

Patty Anderson/Dunbar Spring. Why is this road plan tied to drainage improvements? It was never a part of the Pima County vote.

Ian Fritz/Dunbar Spring NA President. Dunbar Spring residents overwhelming think the plan stinks. The process has pitted neighborhoods against neighborhoods, especially around the drainage issue.