

**DOWNTOWN LINKS CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE – MONTHLY MEETING**

**ACTION REPORT AND SUMMARY**

Monday, August 14, 2006

FROM: TDOT Project Manager Shellie Ginn

Gene Caywood called the meeting to order at 5:40 P.M. at the Joel D. Valdez Main Library

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

- Chair** Eugene Caywood (Old Pueblo Trolley)
- Vice-Chair** Don Durband (Tucson Downtown Alliance)
- John Burr (Armory Park Neighborhood Association)
- Charles Davis (Barrio Anita Neighborhood Association)
- Joseph Maher, Jr. (Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee)
- Natasha Winnik (Dunbar-Spring Neighborhood Association)
- John Sedwick (Fourth Avenue Merchants Association)
- Kory Kruckmeyer (Pie Allen Neighborhood Association)
- Mindy Bernstein (West University Neighborhood Association)
- Christopher Carroll (El Presidio Neighborhood Association)
- David Hoyt Johnson (Tucson-Pima Arts Council)
- Jonathan Levy (Iron Horse Neighborhood Association)
- Gerald Juliani (Tucson-Pima County Historical Commission)

**PROJECT TEAM:**

- Jim Glock, TDOT
- Andrew Singelakis, TDOT
- Shellie Ginn, TDOT
- Melissa Antol, TDOT
- Michael Graham, TDOT
- Mike Barton, HDR Engineering, Inc.
- Corky Poster, Poster Frost
- Joan Beckim, Kaneen Advertising & Public Relations

AGENDA ITEM/COMMITTEE ACTION	STAFF ACTION
<b>1. Opening Remarks and Introductions</b>	<u>NO ACTION REQUIRED</u>
<b>2. Approval of Meeting Minutes</b> It was <b>MOVED</b> by Natasha Winnik to accept the June 12, 2006 meeting minutes with no changes. Seconded by Don Durband. Motion <b>PASSED</b> .	<u>APPROVED MINUTES TO BE POSTED TO WEBSITE</u>
<b>3. No Announcements</b>	<u>NO ACTION REQUIRED</u>
<b>4. Plaza Centro at 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Underpass</b> Introduction to the presentation was made by Jim Glock, TDOT Director. Work on the Plaza Centro project has been progressing since the last presentation made to this Committee in March. The project concept does require the demolition of the historic 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue Underpass. The Historic Commission accepted the demolition of the underpass with the caveat	

that the decisions made by this Committee regarding Downtown Links does not impact the Stone Avenue Underpass and that it retains its designation and remains on the historic register. This version of the Plaza Centro concept allows for greater land assemblies east of the Rialto Theatre and on the north side of Congress Street between 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the connection with Toole to the south. Traffic concerns have been addressed with respect to the closure of Toole between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenues. Because of concerns regarding trolley and streetcar operations, a meeting of trolley operations experts from around the country convened in Tucson last week to review the plan and TDOT is now waiting for their report. Jim said he will return to the Committee to report on this effort once that group's recommendations have been received. The contractor is already on board so as soon as a design for this project is finalized, building can commence.

Jim Glock introduced Alex Istanbulu, an architect who is a new member of the consultant team, and has been working with Jim Campbell and the City to bring together the various design elements for Plaza Centro and the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Underpass. Alex presented the urban design plan as a series of ideas for the new properties being created around 4<sup>th</sup> and Toole Avenues. The design stressed safety and security in creating one 12-foot walkway on the east side of the underpass which is also more cost effective. Jim Campbell said that once the Mayor and Council votes to define the alignment, he will then know what parcels he is dealing with for development. Questions were raised regarding ADA issues and bicycle movement through the project. The plan includes an elevator by the stairs on the north end of the project that would move people between levels for parking and other movement. Bicycles will move with the traffic with one bike lane moving north and another moving south. Ninth Street will be narrowed at the intersection of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue for a safer, shorter crosswalk area and angled parking on Ninth Street is also a possibility. Issues also brought up were safety for students who walk through the underpass from school to the transit center, and why the focus of the sidewalk is on the east side only even though most pedestrians will probably access the west side.

Jim Campbell said that he has spoken to many property and business owners and the majority supports a plan that would activate the area as a whole instead of just a sidewalk on the left or right side and they feel that the movement of this plan would do that. Regarding safe access for pedestrians and bicyclists through 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue to and from downtown during construction, Jim Glock said that the City is working on options and they may recommend that students from Tucson High use 8<sup>th</sup> Street to get to 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the transit center. Shuttle service around the construction area is also being considered. In response to several questions, Jim Glock said that if the committee is going to move ahead with this, a recommendation probably needs to be made at this meeting and the hope is to get this project's key design elements to the Mayor & Council Río Nuevo Downtown Subcommittee by September so the City can begin the first phase of construction in October. Regarding the

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Action will be  
placed on next  
agenda.

tradeoffs of one large sidewalk as opposed to two narrower sidewalks, Jim Glock said that in the realm of urban design for this project, the City is satisfied with traffic flow and pedestrian safety and the ability to manage the public transportation system with this plan.

Comments were made on the pedestrian traffic that uses 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue to walk south to and through Armory Park and this plan create a safe crossing at Congress Street. Suggested was a HAWK on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue to help students and other pedestrians safely cross at that underpass. Jim Glock said they will review all the recommendations for adequate access and safety of pedestrians during the construction phase. Other comments expressed were that the larger sidewalk on one side is a good urban solution which takes you away from the traffic going by and the opportunity to bring the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Street Fair through and under a new 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Underpass. This design is a long-term solution and an opportunity to promote all the good that happens on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and bring that onto Congress Street making residents of the surrounding neighborhoods and people coming downtown comfortable moving from one end of the project to the other.

ADA access was clarified and a few members objected to this plan saying that some people would consider the movement of crossing from the parking and sidewalk on the east side to access the west side too far to travel. They also felt that pedestrians are sensitive to the length they have to walk and adding 200 feet to that walk is unconscionable. There is approval of the plan with one 24-foot sidewalk, but believe it is on the wrong side. There was also disagreement with the closing of Toole Avenue at 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue because of the significant amount of traffic using Toole now. Jim Glock said that the length of this underpass plan does not require any special ventilation requirements and that the City is looking at non-porous materials and sprinklers that could flush out the underpass to remedy bad odor problems experienced in the current underpass. Placement of security cameras will also be considered. Asked why two sidewalks couldn't be considered for this plan, Jim Glock said there are some width challenges, but if the Committee suggests this, they will look into it. Because of the amount of traffic that currently uses Toole Avenue, it was suggested that planners consider leaving Toole open between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenues.

It was **MOVED** by John Sedwick for the planners to arrive at a design with two sidewalks, one on each side of the underpass. Motion seconded by Gerry Juliani.

A discussion followed with the Committee feeling they were being asked to make a decision about an important issue without much time to consider it. It was emphasized that in order to meet the timetable outlined by Jim Glock, it would be necessary to make a decision at this meeting or this Committee's recommendation will be bypassed. Jim Campbell said that he would be back to every meeting to be sure that the Committee has the information they need to make an informed decision.

It was again emphasized that the momentum for this project has changed and that the Committee still needs to decide on this part of the project now because of they don't Mayor and Council may make that decision without this Committee's input.

One member said he would like to see two 24-foot sidewalks on either side, however, he would have to abstain or vote against it if their only reality is an underpass, traffic, trolleys, bikes and some kind of pedestrian accommodation. If there is only 24-feet for sidewalks, he wants it on one side and he wants to know this is a reality before he is asked to vote. In order to get a win-win situation all the way around, he recommended that the Committee come up with what their preferences are and have those preferences presented to Mayor and Council for their consideration. Jim Glock was asked if two 18-foot sidewalks on either side could be accommodated on this project. Jim responded by saying the City would have to review that idea. He also recommended that a motion be worded to say that the project have two sidewalks at the maximum width allowable within the constraints that they're working with.

With a motion on the floor, the vote was 4 in favor, 6 opposed and 1 abstention. Motion **FAILED**.

Chris Carroll **MOVED**

1. That this concept be approved with the broad sidewalk placed on the east side.
2. That, if possible, there be pedestrian sidewalk, narrower in width, also placed on the west side of the project.
3. That the suggested stairway pedestrian access over the underpass also include an ADA accessible elevator.

Motion seconded by Don Durband. John Sedwick commented that the Committee needs to be more specific about what they are asking the Mayor and Council Subcommittee to consider. With no other discussion, the vote was 7 in favor, 3 opposed. Motion **PASSED**.

Mindy Bernstein voiced her concerns over the closing of Toole Avenue. Don Durband suggested that a discussion item regarding the closing of Toole Avenue be placed on the next meeting's agenda.

A letter to the Mayor and Council Rio Nuevo Downtown Subcommittee will be drafted by the Chair and Co-Chair with the Downtown Links CAC recommendations for this project. The draft letter will be emailed to all Committee members for review and approval.

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Item will be placed  
on next agenda.

**5. Revised Neighborhood Outreach Process**

Andrew Singelakis explained that the project team has met individually with all of the CAC members to go through all the alignment concepts. Since the last meeting the process has been changed slightly. It was decided to go out to the neighborhood outreach meetings with all the alignments that have been reviewed and then return to the September 11

NO ACTION  
REQUIRED

<p>CAC meeting with the alternatives narrowed down to three. Along with that, the consultants will give their recommendations so that those can be presented to the neighborhood groups as well. They will also allow for other alternatives that the team may not be thinking of to also be presented at those meetings as well.</p> <p>The Committee was given copies of the materials the team plans to present at the neighborhood meetings and they were asked to review them and give their comments if they have any.</p>	
<p><b>6. Revised Project Schedule</b></p> <p>Shellie Ginn commented on the individual meetings with the CAC members and thanked them for inviting other concerned neighbors to these meetings to review the alignment concepts. Because of these meetings there were some additional alternatives discussed that the team will consider and the concerns of the bicycle/pedestrian connection were brought forth very clearly and these issues will definitely be addressed by the team as part of this project.</p> <p>Mike Barton commented that they are planning on the alignment concepts being refined in September, and the team will continue their outreach on the land use concepts. Also, it seemed that the majority of members preferred the toned-down versions of the concepts. In September the concepts will be presented to this Committee from an engineering perspective to help with their evaluation of these ideas.</p>	<p><u>NO ACTION REQUIRED</u></p>
<p><b>7. History and Goals</b></p> <p>Mike Barton explained that the purpose of this item was to show the timeline of when the City first began discussing this project, remembering where they came from, the processes they went through, and where they are trying to head with the overall goal. These materials will be used at the neighborhood presentations to describe what this project is envisioned to do.</p>	<p><u>NO ACTION REQUIRED</u></p>
<p><b>8. Call to Audience</b></p> <p>A 29-year business owner on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, an audience member (Daniel) expressed his disappointment that the Call to the Audience comes at the end of the meeting which does not give the audience the opportunity to influence the decisions being made by the Committee. He appreciates the attempt to energize Downtown. He believes that a study should be done on the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue underpass to determine how many people are using the Underpass, where are they going, where are they coming from. 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue is conducting their own study by putting up a surveillance camera to monitor the Underpass and will give the study to whoever will listen. He said that if the underpass is closed during construction traffic will go through the neighborhoods making it a treacherous situation. If you're traveling on Broadway, the gateway to downtown is beautiful until you reach the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue underpass. What is significant is the southbound gateway coming down 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue into downtown. He would like the committee to think of the aesthetic value of the people entering</p>	

<p>downtown from 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and give some consideration as to what that will look like. He approved of the compromise of having two sidewalks to take care of everyone’s needs and it shouldn’t force people to cross over. He doesn’t think that wider sidewalks are necessary and if you set booths up in the underpass you will be next to traffic breathing fumes and he wouldn’t want to be breathing that all day. Since the approval has been given to demolish the historic underpass, perhaps consideration should be given to realigning the underpass a little more to the east to make the angles for the trolley more gradual.</p> <p>An audience member (Ignacio) commented that no one dealt with any of the safety issues of the underpass that he feels are important. His experiences walking through the underpass have been horrible and he feels that it should be wider to enable one to see all the way through . The underpass should be a safe, clean and pleasant environment to walk through. He felt that there was more interest in the 6 days of the Street Fair than the other 360 days that he as a resident will be using the underpass. He agrees that there should be sidewalks on both sides but if that is unrealistic, then he’ll take one usable sidewalk. He also thinks that Plaza Centro sounds like a parking lot with room for 60 cars. He also thinks that Downtown Links will be affecting two neighborhoods and neither of those neighborhoods will want to be encroached as well as Barrio Anita and no one wants that traffic. If this is a town that is committed to the arts, there are great art warehouses that are fully functional, alive, and incredibly vibrant and that this roadway will take down the buildings that straddle the train tracks on 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue and that would be a huge blow to the arts world here in Tucson.</p> <p>An audience member (Chris) said that a 24-foot pedestrian walkway is almost as wide as this room which is ample space to have pedestrian traffic in two directions. He considers this plan bad urban planning and if there are sidewalks on both sides it would be similar to what is there now instead of blowing out every semblance of the historic underpass. If the walkways are on the east side, there will be no pedestrian feed directly into that plaza. It will be a magnet for undesirables in that space.</p> <p>An audience member (Dick) would like the audience to get copies of the handouts the members have. If not, he would like to see the handouts posted somewhere in the room so that the audience members can see what is being discussed during the meeting. A team member commented that all of these handouts will be posted onto the Website the day after the meetings.</p>	<p><u>TDOT STAFF</u> Handouts will be posted at future meetings</p>
<p><b>9. Meeting Schedule</b> There will be meeting on September 11.</p>	<p><u>NO ACTION REQUIRED</u></p>
<p><b>10. ADJOURNMENT at 7:25 p.m.</b></p>	