

Broadway Coalition

Response to Darryl Cole Memorandum to Councilmember Romero dated 6/17/14.

We appreciate the effort put into the writing of the memo; it addresses some very important topics. We hope this is the beginning of a true dialog on some of the issues involved in the Broadway project and allows for a way forward to be found that will help make Tucson a thriving, *livable* community.

The most disappointing overall aspect of the memo is that there is no discussion of sense of place, nor any overt effort to help the community and merchants in the project corridor maintain Broadway as a destination, nor was there any mention of historic preservation. As is clear to everyone, it is not the number of lanes that matters to being able to maintain a sense-of-place, a destination, but the width of the roadway. Instead, what we read as implicit in the memo is that the Broadway Corridor is being considered as only an arterial roadway through which automobiles must travel to destinations elsewhere, and whatever collateral damage is done in the process of enabling that, is, well, an unfortunate consequence of these "improvements".

We use header quotes from the various sections in that original memo about which we are commenting.

"1. No Diminishment of Functionality: Immediately after adopting the RTP, the Board adopted its Resolution No. 2005-02, which approved policies for implementation of the RTP. Among these policies was item 2, which read:

Functionality Not to be Diminished....."

The memo goes on to argue that it is "the functionality as originally envisioned for the project scope included in the RTA Plan is not diminished."

Point #1 contains a discussion of functionality, and in the memo, functionality is narrowly construed to mean primarily moving automobiles through faster. There is no mention of the instructions from Mayor and Council to examine other definitions of functionality as found in modern transportation plans adopted by leading US cities. The definition implicitly used by Director Cole, limited as it is to vehicular traffic, is counter to the above mentioned instructions to consider the EPA's twelve criteria for measuring functionality on a multi-modal roadway. 'Level of Service' ratings of the roadway should not be the only criterion used to decide whether functionality is met.

In addition, the data show (see attached Traffic Chart) that traffic has not developed to match the projections used as the basis for the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). According to the RTA's lawyer, Thomas Benavidez, in a presentation to the CART on 5/22/13, the RTA has a fiduciary responsibility to spend the bond money wisely, and can make changes in the plans as needed to fulfill its fiduciary responsibility. Therefore if a road widening is not needed to meet future use, it is a waste of money. In fact, changes have been made in several of the road projects in the RTP.

The Citizens Task Force (CTF) at an early CTF meeting repeatedly asked Jim deGrood (Deputy Director, RTA) to define functionality. His reply was that it was the job of the CTF to define functionality. The City Council also asked the CTF to do this. At a RTA Technical Management Meeting, when Chairman Chuck Huckleberry was asked to define functionality, he deferred saying that we was waiting to see what the CTF came up with. There is no record that the CTF has adopted a definition of functionality.

We still believe that the definition of functionality for Broadway Boulevard must include helping to maintain the existing sense-of-place; this requires that the destruction of businesses and historic buildings be minimized, so that people will continue to find it attractive to go and to be there. We need to seek more creative solutions to road design, so that this can happen as well.

"2) \$7 Million Expenditures Repayment. In the event that the Broadway project stops, repayment to the RTA and Pima County would need to occur. "

Item #2 in the memo addresses the need for the city to pay back money (\$7.1 M) thus far spent on the Broadway project. We do not understand the origin of this 'need'. We know of no precedent or law requiring such repayment, nor do we know of any requests from Pima County or the RTA to reimburse money that was spent in good faith, with their approval, on a project that for some reason could not go forward as planned.

There is also some confusion over what money is being discussed. According to your memo, since 2006 and as of May 30, 2014 \$6,921,280 has been spent in acquisitions, planning/design/engineering, project management environmental and utilities, with most coming from RTA and some from 1997 Pima County Bond funds. However, this is at variance with your document for the CTF, dated 12/19/2012, which states that \$7.6 million has already been spent on acquisitions and relocations. There, you reported the sources of this money as being: RTA, Pima County 1997 Bonds, PAG, and the City of

Tucson (COT), the largest amount, \$2,286,900, coming from COT. We think such discrepancies should be resolved.

Were there in reality a need to do so, you could transfer the property thus far purchased to the entity whose funds were used to acquire it, as listed in your 12/19/2012 memo.

In a time of budget austerity, it seems to us that threatening the decision-makers with having to return funds is a scare tactic. Please cite precedence where returning funds for projects not undertaken has occurred.

In addition, the Broadway Coalition has NOT advocated stopping the project. Rather, they have repeatedly asked that needed improvements be made in a way that preserves sense of place, helps the local businesses and protects our historic heritage. We believe that with context sensitive design, that can be done.

"3) Net Project Costs: It is important to note that the Citizens Task Force and community have requested that costs be one of the performance measures to assess the alternatives under consideration."

Item #3 addresses the net costs of the project. Of course, the net costs of the project will not be known until the project is complete. The prudent project planners will, however, have some clear idea as to how much the project should cost, and what the differential costs associated with different road widths and profiles will be. One question that needs to be asked *before* you start construction is: "Is the total budget for the project still realistic?" That of course depends on the road right-of-way choices. That is what we wanted to bring attention to. Can every possible variation be accomplished within the RTP budget? The numbers we presented are based on our study of the County Assessor's records, and represent our attempt to examine potential differences in acquisition costs between the several roadways being proposed. That has not been part of the discussion within the CTF thus far.

In fact it is well known that the County Assessor's assessed valuation is far below market value. For example in the case of Albert's Garage on the corner of Campbell and Broadway, the assessed valuation is \$359,284 and price paid was \$893,000 (as listed on December 19, 2012 document given to the Broadway Blvd CTF.) This purchase price was nearly 2.5 times the assessed valuation. That brings into question the amount of money required for the extensive acquisitions planned for the wider roadway over the narrower one.

"4) Acquisition and Relocation Costs: The only acquisition estimates reported so far for the project that do not include relocation and demolition are those reported in the "Sidewalk Only scenario." Every other estimate provided for with our process so far includes all aspect of acquisition costs, including demolition, environmental, architectural documentation, and relocation costs (see attached bar graph presented to the 4/30/2014)."

Item #4 deals with relocation costs. We used the projected numbers for our chart that came from the Technical Advisory Committee Report as presented to the Mayor and Council on May 6, 2014.

"5) Sales Tax Revenue Impacts: The way in which the issue of sales tax impacts is raised suggests that it is presumed that acquisition and relocation takes away sales tax revenues from the City. This is an incorrect assumption..."

Item #5 discusses city sales taxes. That discussion assumes that all the businesses that are closed as a result of this project will relocate within the city and do well. That is not an appropriate assumption for a location that currently enjoys a sense of place that comes from the synergy of opportunities for eating, purchasing, and services. Some of these businesses thrive *because* they are on this sector of Broadway, which is a destination. Move them elsewhere, and they may languish.

We point to Austin's a once thriving, well-established and treasured diner and ice cream store next to Broadway Village. It moved across from Park Place and in one year closed down. There is a synergy between location and a business. Sometimes it improves with a change in place, sometimes it doesn't. Moving businesses off this section of Broadway will also impact the Rio Neuvo funding that collects taxes along the north side of Broadway and downtown, and not in other sections of the city.

"6) Size of Remnant Properties: Variations of the alignment are still under review, and the size of remnant properties is a factor that is being considered. However, in general, the remaining lots for the various configurations of the 4-lane, r+2T/6-lane are developable."

Item #6 addresses the issue of the viability of small remnant parcels. Mr. Cole states that parcels greater than 80 feet deep are economically viable; however, the staff, despite repeated requests, has not provided any evidence that this is the case for streets similar to what is envisioned for Broadway.

While there have been drawings showing how remnant parcels can be developed, these examples demonstrate that they will create a very different place. The examples showed building several stories high surrounded by parking lots, demonstrating that the streetscape will not be pedestrian friendly. Sections of the street, like Solot Plaza and Inglis Flower complex, are walkable because the stores/services are adjacent to each other. What is proposed in the drawings doesn't create these types of spaces. Currently, the overwhelming majority of non-residential uses on Broadway are buildings greater than 80 feet on parcels greater than 135 feet.

This view is shared by the economic consultants, EPS, who wrote a substantial report for the Broadway project. That report stated that there is little demand by developers for shallow parcels. The wider right-of-way variations create such parcels. That they tend not to be viable was also confirmed by Wulf Grote, Director of Transit for metropolitan Phoenix, who was also brought to advise the CTF: they also found that shallow parcels were not viable.

"7) Property Tax Impacts: Questions have been asked about whether the widening will reduce the amount of taxable land – both in number because the City assumes ownership, and in size because the land becomes part of the new roadway – and how that will impact are local revenues."

Item #7 deals with property tax issues, and describes well the process of setting property taxes. After some discussion, the memo concludes:

"Conclusions. Bottom line, investments in roadway improvements can result in investments in the properties adjacent to the roadway following construction, and high property values and property taxes down the line. It should be expected that there will be new businesses, and new mixed uses and infill that come into the area. This will bring new employment, new population, sales tax revenues, and additional property taxes that will benefit the community. Additionally, a more multimodal street can help to create an environments that encourages more shopping and dining at restaurants which would help increase sales tax generation."

This conclusion is true only if the improvements increase opportunities for local businesses to thrive and well create a built environment that is interesting to pedestrians and bicyclists. Road improvements do not necessarily provide these benefits. It requires attention in the design to what is needed to attract businesses. Alignments that reduce lot depth makes it more difficult to attract businesses that everyone states they desire. If Broadway remains a destination, all those things

mentioned will likely come to pass. If the Broadway project makes this into just another sub-freeway arterial, then the scenario described in that paragraph will not materialize.

We agree with the vision and hope found in the conclusion, *with the important caveat* that it is true ONLY IF the sense-of-place is not fractured by the roadway “improvements”. If Broadway remains a destination, all those things mentioned will likely come to pass. If the Broadway project makes this into just another sub-freeway arterial, then the scenario described in that paragraph will not materialize.

We look at roadway improvements around the town in the style being proposed for Broadway – wide landscaping, wide sidewalks, few curb cuts, big medians. For example, on Campbell Ave from Speedway to Grant, no new businesses have developed.

“8) Maintenance and Operation Costs: The total 20-year capital operations and maintenance costs related to a new constructed Broadway asphalt are estimated at approximately \$2 million for a 4-lane roadway and \$3 million for a 6-lane roadway. “

Point 8 goes on to state that landscaping, lighting, signal, transit or other maintenance costs are expected to be very similar between the 4-lane and 6-lane design alternatives. We are glad to see that these costs are finally being stated for the public to understand. However, we do note that, as common sense would suggest, that a 6-lane road does cost more to maintain than a 4-lane road.

9) Roadway Dimensions: A map is online that shows the existing dimensions throughout the project area.”

Point 9 contains the URL to find the latest of the map alignments. The map shows the widths of the proposed alignment at a number of different places. In some places the 6-lane is 118 feet, but also goes up to as high as 170 feet where there are local access roads with parking in front of some of the clusters of small businesses in historic buildings. The intersections are also larger than the 118 feet because of the left-turn lanes and right turn lanes. We are trying to get the truth out on the table, not hiding behind some statement of the roadway being just 118 feet.

We also think that the alignments showing that some of the streets into residential areas will be cut off from left hand turns because the median will run through those intersections needs to be brought to the attention of the neighborhoods where this is happening.

We are asking for full and honest disclosure of the widths in presentations, not just relying on the maps to inform people. Many people find the maps hard to read and do not understand how the blue lines drawn on the maps relate to cross-sections drawn out.

We are also disappointed that we could not locate on any map of the 6-lane alignment where the roadway is 96 feet wide as Director Cole promised Council Member Cunningham he could provide.

"10) Preserving Right of Way for Transit: The entire 11-mile Broadway corridor is the highest ridden bus route in the region.

Point 10 goes on to state that the road alignment should preserve right-of-way for some future mass transit. While this idea has been discussed since the 1970s and the RTA ballot language for Number 17 specifically mentions 2 lanes for transit, we wonder why there was no money put aside for a transit study as part of this roadway project. How can the CTF or the City Council make a rational decision with no professional study of the options and costs. The last transit study, 1991, stated the area was not yet ready for dedicated transit. What has changed since then that would suggest the 11-mile corridor is ready today, or even in the near future for rapid transit.

If the transit is added later, as was done in the Phoenix Metro area, it was, in most areas, done within the existing right-of-way. The street car was put in without tearing down any buildings!

Conclusion

In conclusion the Broadway Coalition states again its support for improving Broadway in such a way that multimodal functionality is improved, and sense of place, historic buildings, and local business are preserved. We envision a street where pedestrians and bicyclists can travel safely, motor vehicles can move smoothly, and transit is inviting so people *want* to use it. It is a destination in that its sense-of-place is maintained and people want to stop and hang out there. With creative and sensitive design, we are convinced this vision can be made a reality at an affordable price. It is road width, not the number of lanes, which is important.

BROADWAY COALITION



*Broadway my way
not a highway!*