

Meeting 1

November 12, 2014 – 6 – 8:00 p.m., West Mesa Community Center, 5500 Glenrio Rd. NW

Corridor Segment: Central Ave to St Josephs

Theme: Transportation and Development Design Issues

Stakeholder Issues	
These issues have been compiled from the feedback the Environmental Planning Commission has received on the draft of the Coors Corridor Plan*. <i>Staff responses are in the right-hand column</i>	
Transportation	
Traffic congestion on Coors is part of a bigger problem caused by West-East commuters. Address it by:	
Not approving more residential development in the Corridor	<i>Like the 1984 plan, the draft does not establish or change land uses through zoning. The jobs/housing imbalance on the West Side is addressed in other City plans like the West Side Strategic Plan, and zoning is established in many areas by sector plans and prior approvals. Property-owners' current zoning entitlements can't be changed without justification, i.e. meeting the tests of City Resolution 270-1980.</i>
Adding a river crossing	<i>The City developed the transportation strategy for the draft Plan with various agencies including NMDOT, the County, Rio Rancho, and MRCOG. NMDOT is a critical partner because the ROW of Coors Blvd/Bypass is currently under their jurisdiction. The study was based on traffic forecasts and modeling that relate to the metropolitan area as a whole, and how Coors fits into this bigger transportation network. Coors is the most important arterial on the West Side because it carries people travelling north-south, many of whom live outside the City, and it also connects to several river crossings. The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is the overall plan for the region, which is developed by the MRMPO and adopted by MRCOG representing all the jurisdictions. The current (2035) MTP acknowledges that we can't build our way out of congestion and targets Coors for transit improvements. An updated Coors Corridor Plan will contribute to the future MTP and can influence what projects are implemented.</i>
Widening or adding double-decks to bridges	
Creating a commuter lane	
Finishing other proposed roads on the West Side (e.g. Paseo del Volcan)	
Managing travel demand (e.g. staggered office hours, van/car-pooling)	<i>The transit agencies do work with some employers to promote transit ridership and van/car-pooling. However, employers, institutions and individuals ultimately determine how and when to travel. The draft Plan recommends that Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) continue to be deployed on Coors Blvd. This high-tech system of sensors and message boards can adjust signal timing and alert drivers about accidents and alternative routes (e.g. Unser to access I-40). However these measures will not solve the West Side transportation network's major weakness- a lack of a grid street pattern and therefore of "connectivity.</i>
Adjusting signals at turns.	<i>Signals can be adjusted if warranted. The need for adjustment would be evaluated by NMDOT in conjunction with the City of ABQ, which operates the signals.</i>

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) south of I-40. The local costs outweigh the benefits of widening Coors Blvd.:	
Dedicating lanes for transit only is a waste of additional road space	<p><i>The transportation study looked at a range of scenarios to manage traffic congestion, including widening Coors to 12 lanes. The multi-modal strategy presented in the plan update that includes a premium transit service like BRT was chosen because it produced the best overall result during advanced scenario modeling, and because it's consistent with the goals of the MTP.</i></p> <p><i>The traffic on river crossings feeding onto Coors is a primary cause of congestion on Coors. Instead of 8 general purpose driving lanes in the 1984 Coors plan, the update calls for 6 general purpose and 2 transit lanes. As transit vehicles can carry more people than cars in the same amount of road space, dedicating lanes for transit can reduce travel times and make transit a more attractive choice for travelling along the Corridor and across the river.</i></p>
There will be takings of commercial property	<p><i>If a BRT scenario was to be implemented on Coors, a transit agency like Rio Metro or ABQ Ride would take the lead and seek federal funding. The process would take several years and require extensive technical and financial feasibility studies. Potential impacts to adjacent homes and businesses would be identified and evaluated, including compensation for property where necessary.</i></p> <p><i>Safety of adjacent properties would be considered and any significant noise would be mitigated as part of the design. Alternative access for businesses would also be identified and secured before any medians or driveways are closed.</i></p>
High-speed traffic will be closer to residents' backyards, with an increase in traffic noise and higher risk of residential property damage from accidents	
Landscaped medians will be eliminated	<p><i>The pros and cons of running a BRT in the median vs. at the curb, including impacts on adjoining properties and existing landscaped medians, would be evaluated as part of the feasibility study and project design.</i></p> <p><i>Note that the recommended sections in the Plan call for a landscape strip between the curb and sidewalk, which provides a buffer and shade for pedestrians in addition to enhancing the Corridor.</i></p>
If BRT is implemented, use median not curbside lanes, because they will require less ROW and have less negative impact on adjacent homes and businesses.	

Businesses and residents are concerned about the proposed grade-separated roadway north of I-40, including:	
Taking of commercial property	<p><i>Due to funding constraints and a flat budget, the NMDOT is transitioning to a state-wide priority system of funding roadway projects according to rank and need. Projects on interstate and national roads may take precedence over those on state roads like Coors.</i></p> <p><i>If this roadway project is pursued, feasibility studies would involve identifying impacts on adjacent properties and neighborhood and measures to address them, including compensation and the mitigation of noise and pollution.</i></p>
Eliminating access to businesses and side streets	
Bringing traffic noise and emissions closer to homes	
A wall to support the grade-separated roadway will be visually obstructive—for businesses and the neighborhoods on either side of Coors.	<p><i>The concept in the draft Plan is just that; an alternative design to a solid wall is technically feasible.</i></p>
Businesses will react to an elevated roadway by requesting taller signs including LED signs, which will create visual clutter.	<p><i>Two driving lanes would be maintained on Coors at the same grade as adjacent businesses, which would maintain visibility. The signage regulations in the Design Overlay Zone of the Plan address the case of a sign mounted above the roof-line of a building on property adjacent to a new elevated segment of Coors Blvd.: the request would be subject to review and approval by the EPC or Planning Director according to several factors. The DOZ prohibits electronic display/board panels throughout the Corridor.</i></p>
Bicyclists' safety should be a top priority.	
Bike lanes on Coors should be separated from motor vehicle traffic with a physical barrier.	<p><i>As the conditions along Coors vary, there are a variety of ways of handling bike lanes along the corridor. The project team is considering the methods of handling the design of bike lanes along Coors.</i></p>

Development Design	
Treat the Corridor south of I-40 the same as north of I-40	<i>The draft Plan proposes the same regulations south and north of I-40 up to Namaste to maintain some visual open-ness and enhance the appearance of the Corridor. For example, new development and redevelopment must include a 15 ft landscape setback/buffer and the height of buildings and signs is more limited than under "straight" zoning (without the Plan). The DOZ prohibits electronic displays/panel signs throughout the Corridor; otherwise, they would be allowed in most locations south of St. Josephs.</i>
Protect views south of I-40	<i>Like the 1984 Plan, the draft Plan recognizes that there are different conditions along the 10+ miles of the Corridor. While the Sandia Mountains are visible in some places from south of I-40, they are more distant and less prominent than where Coors curves north of Namaste and approaches the river, providing views to the mountains and bosque. The Public Projects chapter of the Plan recommends that the City pursue beautifying "orphan" strips of land along Coors; 3 out of 4 potential areas identified for this treatment are south of I-40.</i>

* Note: all the comments on the draft Plan and staff responses are attached to staff reports. The reports are accessible from the project webpage: <http://www.TinyURL.com/cabq-coorscorridorplan> (see June 5, July 10, August 14 and October 2, 2014, Project #1005238) Contact Carol Toffaleti, Project Manager, 924-3345, cgtoffaleti@cabq.gov if you need assistance.

