

Silverbell Road Task Force Wednesday, August 4, 2010

REVISED Summary of Meeting #9

The ninth meeting of the Silverbell Road Task Force (SRTF) took place from 6:05 to 7:55 p.m. at the Luz Academy, 2797 North Introspect Drive. In attendance were the following members of the Task Force:

Wain Cooper, Regional Transportation Authority
Hurvie Davis, Town of Marana Neighborhoods
Kendall Elmer, Pima County Neighborhoods
Michael Mencinger, Regional Transportation Authority (revision - name added as attending)
Judith Meyer, Pima County Neighborhoods
Barbara Whitaker, City of Tucson Neighborhoods
Sandy Fagan, City of Tucson Neighborhoods
Angela Wagner-Gabbard, Town of Marana Neighborhoods
Robert De La Cerda, City of Tucson Neighborhoods
Midge Hardy, City of Tucson Businesses
Bradley Lang, City of Tucson Businesses
Frank Stryker, City of Tucson Businesses

Absent were SRTF members Gale Marsland, Pima County Businesses, Julie Prince, Tucson-Pima County Bicycle Advisory Committee, ~~Michael Mencinger, Regional Transportation Authority~~, and Josh Wright, Town of Marana Businesses.

Also present were members of the Silverbell Road Project Team:

Andy Dinauer, Project Manager, City of Tucson Department of Transportation
Jim Schoen, Project Manager, Kittleson & Associates consultant team
Jason Simmers, Lead Engineer, Kittleson & Associates
Rick Ellis, Project Manager, Pima County Department of Transportation
Scott Leska, Project Manager, Town of Marana
Darlene Showalter, Landscape Architect, McGann and Associates
Evelyn Urrea, Community Outreach, Kaneen Advertising and Public Relations

1. Call Meeting to Order – Confirm Quorum

2. Introductions of SRTF Members and Project Team

Members of the Task Force introduced themselves as did members of the Project Team. Observers were also asked to introduce themselves.

3. Approval of SRTF Meeting Summary of June 2, 2010

The June 2, 2010 SRTF meeting summary was accepted with no changes.

4. Announcements

Jim Schoen reviewed the Task Force Ground Rules with the members. Jim also addressed the issue of the Jehovah Witness Hall median opening location. The City has approved a median opening further south about 600 feet from Camino del Cerro which will allow for better access onto the church property. They will also be modifying the drainage there. Frank Stryker brought up the issue of overflow parking at the church. He has seen up to 100 cars park outside the church's fence along both the west and east sides of Silverbell. Judith Meyer said that the number of seats in the church dictated the number of parking spaces per the zoning code and the church did meet that. The County advised them that there could not be overflow parking on the dirt road that runs behind the church because emergency vehicles would not be able to pass, however, it seemed to her that the City did not hold the church to the same restrictions. Andy Dinauer said that the City did not have jurisdiction because City property is on the opposite side of Silverbell, but he will look into the zoning code violation. Hopefully the road improvements there will eventually resolve the church's overflow parking problems.

5. Staff Reports, Presentations and Discussion

a. Review of Public Meeting Comments

Jim Schoen summarized the comments from the two public meetings held on June 7 and June 9. Both meetings were well attended and there was good feedback. Comments that led to group discussion were:

- Landscaping: Jim said that there were contradictory comments from the public asking the team “to create a finished look but maintain a rural feel” – they’ll try to work on that. ~~Hurvie Davis~~ *Mike Mencinger* (italicized text reflects requested changes) commented about the problems of maintaining roadway landscaping with budget cuts and trimming survivability. Andy said that staff is trying to maximize water harvesting and choosing drought-tolerant, low-maintenance vegetation. Most roadway projects have a temporary irrigation system during the landscaping establishment period and then the irrigation is pulled out and plants are on their own. Brad Lang asked if animals would gravitate toward medians that are heavily landscaped crossing the road to get there. Frank Stryker said that would naturally happen if there is a lot of shrubbery. Kendall Elmer said it would be a bad investment to install so much landscaping that can’t be cared for because of budget cuts and mentioned the jail inmates who are presently being utilized to assist with maintenance of some of the City’s landscaping. Andy said that new landscaping maintenance by the City can go as long as three years and that the City has certified arborists and an urban forester on staff to educate those who might be assisting with maintenance of the landscaping.
- Cultural: There was a comment about having interpretive spots along the roadway for the archaeology. Jim said that is something that they will work on as the project moves forward as part of the art component.
- Environmental impacts: There were requests to minimize wildlife impacts and designers will certainly plan to do that.
- Access: There were requests to maintain access for all modes; sometimes that can’t be done, but they will whatever they can. Residents along Silverbell Road were concerned about access impacts to their driveways and that they will have to make U-turns to get to their homes. The team can to modify the median to reduce some of those impacts.

- Roadway Design: The signalized intersections are skewed because Silverbell is designed at an angle. There was a request asking them to redesign all intersections to make them all sit at a 90-degree angle but that won't be able to be done in this project.
- Noise walls: Later in the meeting, Jason Simmers from Kittelson briefed the Task Force on this subject and possible ways they could do that.

Judith Meyer mentioned the comment about small reptiles and desert tortoises crossing the road. Jim spoke to wildlife folks about cutouts in the median but they're not sure if that would help. It's been suggested that smaller pipes, not intended for drainage, might mitigate the problem and accommodate those types of reptiles. Angela Warren-Gabbard brought up the size of the animal culverts and read someone's comment asking how the City will control people from going down in the larger culverts to create homeless camps. Andy suggested that any homeless camps should be reported to law enforcement and they will work to relocate anyone living there.

a. Soil Nail Wall vs. Grade Slope Discussion

Jason Simmers from Kittelson discussed locations where there are existing hills that will require a soil nail wall, cut slope or a concrete wall. There are 16 locations on the south end of Silverbell and 10 locations on the north end with Camino del Cerro being the dividing roadway. The slope option is not appropriate for private property and those hills will have soil nail walls. The slope option is acceptable for public property because the City will not have to purchase any right-of-way. Asked about the difference of cost for each option, Jason explained that with the soil nail wall, the biggest cost is the wall itself and putting the concrete on that face. The dirt that is excavated from the slope is not really a project cost because the dirt will be used elsewhere. The cost for the slope is for re-vegetating it and installing and maintaining the temporary irrigation system for up to three years. Re-vegetation on this project will include trees, shrubs, native plants with irrigation; they won't just spray a seed mix. A rough estimate of the cost of doing cut slopes is about 40% of the cost of doing soil nail walls. It would be \$180,000 to do the soil nail walls versus ~~\$170,000~~ *\$70,000* (italicized text reflects requested changes).

Barbara Whitaker asked Andy Dinauer about the recent articles regarding the RTA's concerns about costs for projects because a lot of the Task Force's decisions will be based on available funding. The estimates for the RTA were prepared by consultants and for the Silverbell project, the RTA only funded the project at 40% of the consultant's estimate which was over \$4,000,000 less. However, this project is funded from several sources including RTA dollars and the City's and County's pledges for additional dollars through impact fees or bond money. The City is solid with reserved impact fees for this project, but he is not certain of the County's position on funding. He also added that if they need a slope easement from private property, that cost is not necessarily included at this point. The original project cost estimate by consultants was just an estimate based on other similar projects and roadway construction categories. Angela Gabbard-Wagner stressed the issue of cost because at the last meeting the estimates given for just the south portion of the project did not even include the costs for archaeology and already costs topped the amount of the budget for the entire project, not just the south section. Andy said that when the RTA auditor's report comes out, they will have to go before the RTA board and discuss the specific costs of this project.

Jim asked the Task Force for their thoughts about what they would like the designers to consider based on the slope discussion. Wain Cooper thinks it would depend on how much it would cost to purchase a slope easement and would like some irregularity built into the project. He thinks that would be more appealing to the public and would not be as monotonous. Frank feels that the slopes would be more appropriate rather than the cuts where possible and agrees with Wain on showing irregularity to make the area look more rural. Angela said the soil nail walls look nice but because of the cost, if there's a way to make the slopes look better that would be alright. Judith and Barbara said the soil nail walls look nicer and they like consistency. Brad feels that something artificial may be vandalized and would prefer the rural feel and non-uniform look of the slopes.

Asking for some direction on this subject, Andy asked the Task Force for their preferences on slope treatments at this time. Some members felt that guaranteed irrigation for new landscaping with nursery plants and reseeded on the slopes that are cut for at least three years is acceptable at this time. Other members felt that sometimes cutting 100 feet into the slopes, even with re-vegetation, would not look good and they would prefer the soil nail walls. The Team will come back with more options to discuss at future meetings.

b. Landscape Theme Discussion

Darlene Showalter of McGann and Associates landscapers presented various landscaping options reviewing. The Task Force was very pleased with the options and now looks forward to working with these landscaping possibilities. For the PowerPoint presentation go to http://www.silverbellroad.info/documents/Silverbell_Landscape_Themes.pdf

c. General Roadway Q&A from the Task Force

Andy Dinauer said that when the RTA audit results come out in September, if he doesn't notify the members first, they will probably read about it in the paper.

Kendall Elmer asked about entry in the minutes regarding the southernmost part of the project beginning construction in early 2013 which he thought was early. Andy said things really won't start rolling until 2014 because of the archaeology.

Brad Lang brought up installing a HAWK on Silverbell at Introspect Drive for all the students who are dropped up by public buses and cross the road to attend Luz Academy.

Andy said that the need for a HAWK will be addressed in the final design plans.

6. Next Steps

It was announced that the next meeting of the Task Force would be Wednesday, September 1.

7. Call to the Audience

(Herb Havins) He owns the trailer park property that is one of the most severely impacted properties and has yet to be contacted by a member of the design team to discuss design elements. These elements have changed radically since they were originally presented so he would appreciate more contact in this regard.

Julian Hadland, speaking on behalf of elderly residents of the Silverbell Rd. corridor: Several of the SRTF members referred to an article in the Arizona Daily Star of July 18th, 2010. It indicated that the RTA road improvement projects may have to be REDUCED BY 25%. Is it not time to FINE-TUNE the proposed design for the Silverbell Rd. of the future? Is it not time to REDUCE the CONSTRUCTION COSTS and future MAINTENANCE COSTS? Is it not time to MINIMIZE DANGER, without educating school kids and teenagers to what may be an unreasonable degree, and IMPROVE THE EASE with which EMERGENCY VEHICLES can travel along Silverbell Rd.? (You have probably heard about the death of Brandon Schultz. I will not go into the details here.) A CENTRAL TURNING LANE, NOT A CURBED MEDIAN, as is already established on Silverbell Rd. north of Ina Rd., would achieve these aims. See my statements at previous SRTF meetings for details of supporting evidence. Thank you for listening.

8. Adjournment

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