



CITY OF
TUCSON

DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION

October 25, 2013,

Sky Jacobs, President
Dunbar-Spring Neighborhood Association
P.O. Box 508
Tucson, Arizona 85702

Dear Mr. Jacobs,

I received a copy of your letter sent to the Downtown Links Citizen Advisory Committee members and would like to respond on behalf of the City of Tucson Department of Transportation (TDOT).

As you know, the Downtown Links project has been in the makings for several years now, and we have come a long way with design and construction with much input from residents and business owners along the corridor. Residents of Dunbar-Spring have helped guide the progress in a good direction with inclusion of some key elements, like the 9th Avenue bike/ped deck plaza and preservation of the Steinfeld and Citizens warehouses. These are important assets to the community which I fully support.

TDOT staff and our design team are at 75% design completion for the Phase III section of Downtown Links from Church Avenue to Broadway. We have just over one year left to reach 100% design completion in early 2015 and then go out to bid for construction in mid-2015. Given this timeline, it is imperative that we continue with all necessary tasks to prepare the corridor for future construction in less than two years from now.

The concerns and requests outlined in your letter are very valid and I would like to respond to each one:

- 1) Regarding project funding, I want to assure you that Downtown Links will be fully funded using a combination of RTA and regional HURF (state Highway User Revenue Funds) dollars as indicated in the original RTA plan approved by voters in 2006. With support from the Pima Association of Governments (PAG), the HURF funds will be programmed for Phase III construction to occur in the next few years.

Last month, we received RTA approval to: 1) fund the remaining property acquisitions for Phase III and 2) include the 9th Avenue deck plaza in our design scope. See attached letter of confirmation from the RTA. This is a good sign of regional support for moving forward with the necessary steps to complete the corridor project. And we want to stay on schedule.



There is a CAC subcommittee that has been working on the design and features of the deck plaza for several months now. The design concepts have been approved by the CAC with the understanding that the basic features (concrete deck, hardscape, public art, and landscape) will be included in design and construction. The addition of a large ramada and full-size trees on the concrete deck are features still under evaluation as this significantly adds to the structural needs of the deck structure. Large trees can be better installed next to the deck where there is solid ground and good drainage. A ramada structure is workable for the deck as long as it is not massive in size and weight.

My expectation is that the CAC and other public participants be reasonable with deck design and features to help keep the project within budget and easy to maintain in future years. I will be monitoring these issues closely and provide input when necessary.

- 2) Regarding finalization of design plans, TDOT will finalize them in early 2015 with the intent to go out to bid for construction in mid-2015 per the RTA funding schedule. Property acquisitions and tenant relocations can take up to two years, with building demolitions taking up to six months due to many variables such as environmental clean-ups, utility relocations, and any unforeseen conditions. Our schedule is getting tighter, and TDOT staff has my full support to continue with building demolitions as long as they are done with care and following standard procedures. We do not anticipate long delays between site preparations and beginning of Phase III construction, nor do we want to fall behind schedule.
- 3) Regarding Section 106 Compliance, the City is voluntarily following federal guidelines even though this project is not federally-funded. A Cultural Resources Evaluation Report is now complete and it includes a full inventory and analysis of all properties (historic and non-historic) that will be affected by construction activities. The document was approved by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and will be shared with the CAC members at their next public meeting.

City staff has been in regular communication with SHPO officials to monitor this project. A field survey was conducted with them last summer to review the corridor firsthand, which resulted in clear direction regarding several issues. I will refer you to our Historic Preservation Officer Jonathan Mabry for more details regarding the Section 106 Compliance process and SHPO assessment of the corridor project.

I fully understand your concerns regarding the future demolition of historic buildings and impacts to our community. Overall, City staff, the Downtown Links

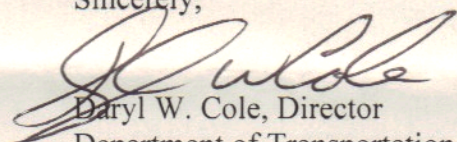
CAC members, design consultants, and other project participants have done a very good job designing the corridor through a very diverse corridor, sacrificing some buildings while protecting others. Please keep in mind all the things we are trying to achieve with this project:

- Upgrading the drainage system to eliminate flooding and deterioration of various neighborhoods and structures (historic and non-historic).
- Providing better connectivity and new facilities for vehicles, bikes, and pedestrians. The current condition of our infrastructure in this corridor is deplorable and is a deterrent to urban revitalization efforts.
- Improving safety at all the at-grade rail crossings and reducing train-horn noise.
 - Preservation of historic buildings, but sacrificing others to do so.
 - Removal of soil contamination of old industrial buildings which are not very safe.
- Establishment of an Urban Overlay District zone to encourage redevelopment with new housing and retail, while reducing vehicle parking requirements.
- Inclusion of public art and native desert landscaping as a true reflection of our culture and history.

There are many people waiting for these improvements to happen. Some of them own buildings needed for the project and are eager to sell so they can make plans for the future. Others are adjacent property owners who cannot invest in upgrades until the corridor improvements are implemented, or who are tired of the 55 train horns each day. We have a real need to move this project forward for the good of the community and will do so in a responsible manner.

Please contact me or my staff (Tom Fisher or Sam Credio) if you need additional clarification on any of the issues related to the Downtown Links projects. The number is 791-4371. I will be monitoring the project very closely.

Sincerely,



Daryl W. Cole, Director
Department of Transportation

DWC/TF/rw

cc: Jonathan Rothschild, Mayor
Regina Romero, Ward I Council Member
Gene Caywood, Downtown Links CAC Chairperson
Jonathan Mabry, Historic Preservation Officer
Farhad Moghimi, Executive Director RTA

Attachment: RTA Correspondence 9/30/13



Regional Transportation Authority

177 N. Church Avenue, Suite 405, Tucson AZ 85701
Phone: (520) 770-9410 Fax: (520) 620-6981

RTAmobility.com

September 30, 2013

Daryl W. Cole, Director
Tucson Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 27210
Tucson, AZ 85726-7210

Re: RTA #16, Downtown Links

Dear Mr. Cole,

The RTA Board approved the intergovernmental agreement amendment, funding the remaining right of way acquisitions for the Downtown Links project at its September 25th meeting. With this approval, \$37,891,000 of RTA funding has now been programmed for the Downtown Links projects.

As part of the staff report, the project scope was reported to now include a pedestrian/bicycle plaza on the 9th Avenue alignment. The Board action confirmed this scope, subject to the existing RTA requirements that the overall landscape costs not exceed 4% of the construction cost and that any cost overruns on the project are the responsibility of the Lead Agency to remedy. With this confirmation of scope, the project can move ahead with final design activities with the assurance that the 9th Avenue pedestrian/bicycle plaza is eligible for reimbursement funding.

Finally, the city's efforts to evaluate and seriously consider the RTA's Value Analysis recommendations to control costs are appreciated. I add that we are aware that the Ina Road bridge over the Santa Cruz is slated for replacement in FY 16, and the box beam girder elements coming out of that bridge may be more satisfactory for use on the pedestrian/bicycle plaza than the longer, skewed beams that the city declined from the Sahuarita Road bridge replacement.

Sincerely,

James R. DeGroot, P.E.
Deputy Director, RTA

cc: Richard Miranda, City Manager
Cherie Campbell, Interim Executive Director