

New Entrance at College Road and University Avenue

To: Chancellor Joan K. Wadlow

From: John D. Craven, Chair
UAF Master Planning Committee

Date: January 15, 1999

Subject: Recommendations Related to UAF's New Entrance at College Road and University Avenue

Construction of the new entrance to UAF at the intersection of College Road and University Avenue (as recommended by the 1991 UAF Master Plan) is scheduled to begin in the spring of '99, with completion expected in the fall of '99 (as per statements by Facilities Services). However, it is the MPC's understanding that the contract provides for a construction period of up to two years. The contract was awarded to H&H Construction before the new Master Planning Committee was formed, so we are unaware of how the '91 Master Plan influenced decisions during the design phase. What is certain is that the existing design for the revised intersection at Taku and University Avenue and the new intersection at College Road and University Avenue will be built. Informative conversations with Steve Titus of Facilities Services about the designs and certain flexibility in the construction program and the MPC's interpretation of the spirit of the '91 Master Plan have led the MPC to formulate four recommendations related to this overall effort.

Recommendation

Certain flexibility exists within the construction program for the College Road entrance to UAF that will allow for the construction of earthen berms along the new entrance to aid in visual isolation of the physical plant areas as one enters the campus. This would focus more attention on the entrance and the approach to the academic areas. Facilities Services should be directed to prepare designs for these berms and for construction to take place as part of work on the intersection. Their designs should include delineation of what is attainable within the present DOT project and long-term plans for additional landscaping. The administration should identify funds to complete the landscaping if it can't be completed as part of the contractor's work.

[MPC recommendation "College 1/15/99/1"]

Recommendation

The MPC strongly supports, as part of the College Road entrance construction program, making provisions for the addition of a pull-out area along the north side of the entrance. A concept sketch is attached. This area would include a information center (in the future) and a large map of the campus. The UAF Alumni Association has expressed interest in partially funding this pull-out area and a lighted sign. The sign would include the UAF logo, time and temperature (to recover the community service once provided by the Key Bank), and possibly timely campus information (e.g., registration dates, athletic events). Design of the sign (concept sketch attached) could act as a prototype for all campus entrances. The area could also include provisions to support the campus and city bus systems, including a shelter and community service officer. The approach to the staircase would be improved. The breadth of this project could be enhanced by community involvement. The MPC is investigating the issue of the "arch" previously designed for this entrance. Facilities Services should be directed to prepare designs for the proposed pull-out area and sign and the inclusion of as much work as possible within limits of the existing construction contract, with the intended purpose of decreasing future expenses as the area is fully developed.

[MPC recommendation "College 1/15/99/2"]

Recommendation

The '91 Master Plan identifies a pedestrian-friendly campus as a central theme of long-term planning. While the '91 plan does not provide specifics regarding many pedestrian-friendly issues, such as sidewalk width, the MPC feels that the current design and construction plan for the College Road entrance does not adequately meet the spirit of the plan. Although it is our understanding that the construction bid for the College Road entrance to UAF has already been awarded, we believe that the design should be revisited. Our specific concerns are as follows:

1. The present design does not appear to have been approached with any concern for pedestrian or bicyclist needs. We are not aware of any alterations to the design in the off-campus areas that will address this either. The crossings at College Road and University Avenue are extremely dangerous, and the opening of East Tanana Drive will compound the dangers. The current system of pedestrian lights is hazardous and confusing. The MPC believes that the best way to address this situation is with the construction of a pedestrian and bike tunnel under University Avenue. A tunnel would have the added benefit of providing access for handicapped individuals.

2. Although the MPC applauds the inclusion of a buffer between the road and the sidewalk along East Tanana Drive as a positive step, we believe further steps are required. The MPC wishes to recommend a design revision that would incorporate minimum sidewalk widths of 7-8' while maintaining the buffer space. Of additional concern is that fact that any pedestrian walkway along East Tanana Drive must be effectively integrated into whatever traffic handling system is designed for the junction of S. Chandalar/Tanana Loop/East Tanana Drive.

3. There are no provisions for bicycle paths or lanes in the College Road entrance design. The MPC recommends a design revision to incorporate either a bike lane or path, which ever best fits the overall design. As with the pedestrian walkway, the bike route must be integrated into the traffic flow pattern at the junction of S. Chandalar/East Tanana Drive/Tanana Loop.

4. If a design revision is not possible to accommodate the recommendation concerning bicycle and pedestrian traffic, then the MPC strongly recommends that the present bike path at the base of the hill between Taku Drive and East Tanana Drive (and connects with the North Loop Road) should be upgraded and a pedestrian path added. The trail should be well marked and lighted. At the junction with Taku Drive, a design plan will be needed to determine the best route for access to campus. The availability of a well designed, maintained bike and pedestrian path would accomplish several things:

- Both pedestrians and cyclists would be provided with a safe alternative to traveling on East Tanana Loop, which will become a heavily traveled main arterial road on to campus.
- Although there is a staircase that goes from East Tanana Drive up to Tanana Loop, it is a challenge for less physically fit persons. In the absence of another route, pedestrians will inevitably choose the easier route along East Tanana Drive. Unless the sidewalk issue is addressed, along with integration into the traffic flow pattern at the top of the hill, the MPC believes that this route will not be safe due to the anticipated volume of traffic.
- If the '91 Master Plan is followed, Taku Drive will no longer be a main artery to and from campus (only to parking lots and one building), therefore, the feasibility of routing pedestrian and bike traffic along it would be greatly increased.
- Upgrading this trail will make a very clear statement about UAF's commitment to making the campus pedestrian friendly. [MPC recommendation "College 1/15/99/3"]

Recommendation

UAF main campus lands extend north and west from the intersection at Geist Road and University Avenue. The MPC is interested in further developing UAF's presence all along each of these boundaries. Relevant for the present project is the area extending west along University Avenue from the Alaska Railroad property past the Taku entrance. Facilities Services should be directed to prepare designs for the repair and enhancement of earthen berms along University Avenue south of the College Road entrance, and for the general repair and/or landscaping north of this intersection. The intent is to enhance the general aesthetic appearance of UAF's entire entrance area along its eastern boundary. Improvements as per these designs should be undertaken where possible as part of construction at the two intersections on University Avenue.

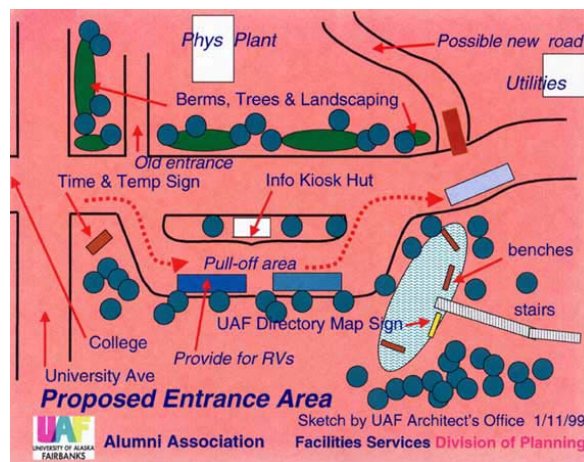
[MPC recommendation "College 1/15/99/4"]

Recommendation

Facilities Services should be instructed to investigate how federal ISTEA funds can be gained for construction of bike paths, pull-out areas, and sidewalk as part of construction for which such funds are applicable. The administration should make certain that such funds are sought. [MPC recommendation "College 1/15/99/5"]

Attachments:

1. Concept sketch by Facilities Services of an entrance area at College Road and University Avenue as stimulated by the UAF Alumni Association.



2. Concept sketch by Facilities Services of a time and temperature sign for the entrance area at College Road and University Avenue as stimulated by the UAF Alumni Association.



3. Summary background information on ISTEA as provided by MPC member Mike Supkis.

ISTEA

18 January 1999

Information concerning ISTEA provided by Mike Supkis

I found a lot of stuff for ISTEA on the US DOT page, I cut an pasted this summary one of many projects FYI...as you can see MPC can encourage ADOT and UAF to advantage of some of this stuff.

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, reauthorized in 1997, makes dramatic changes in the way we view federal transportation funding.

ISTEA serves goals other than the traditional ones of safety and mobility. It created a new funding program that is intended to not only mitigate the undesirable environmental impacts of automobile travel but to make positive improvements in air quality through transportation projects -- a feat no one had ever accomplished.

Thus, the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) was born.

Under prior funding acts, federal investments in transportation were highly segmented. Highway funds were for highways; transit funds were for transit. There was almost no flexibility in the way those funds were to be used. Also, while consideration was given to other transportation services, such as bicycling and carpooling, relatively little support was directed to them.

Federal transportation funding was also very hierarchical before ISTEA. National priorities were set by Congress; state priorities were set in their capitals; and funding programs were designed and implemented to meet those various priorities. Largely missing were local concerns and local needs. The majority of transportation services is local, and the effects of urban sprawl, congestion, and air pollution are most keenly felt in our metropolitan areas.

In December 1991, Congress switched gears and passed the \$155 billion ISTEA, representing a major change in direction. Flexibility is the cornerstone of this groundbreaking legislation -- flexibility to use "highway" funds for transit, "transit" funds for highways, and to generally fund a much broader array of transportation services with either.

But flexibility is not much good unless good decisions are made. That is why ISTEA fosters a needs-based process for determining transportation and funding priorities. It seeks to engender a more strategic use of funds through better planning, introducing new partners in transportation decision making, enhanced public involvement, and greater decentralization of the decision-making process by empowering metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to a greater extent.

ISTEA's challenge is formidable. State highway agencies, local transit operators, and federal transportation organizations have a long history of relative isolation. Changing the organizational structures, analytical methodologies, administrative procedures -- and even psychological mindsets -- to fully deliver on ISTEA's promise will be difficult, taking great effort from all parties.

CMAQ -- The \$6 Billion Experiment

Since its creation, CMAQ has pushed the envelope of how federal transportation dollars are spent. It takes the concept of flexible funding to heart. A 1993 General Accounting Office report acknowledged that in its very first year, CMAQ was unsurpassed in its flexible use of funds. Through the first three years of this innovative program, it has accounted for \$792 million of the \$1.4 billion (57 percent) in "highway" funding that has been used for transit projects. In contrast, the much larger Surface Transportation Program (STP) has transferred only \$355 million to transit. Meanwhile, no transit funds have been used for highway purposes.

The CMAQ program has virtually redefined what a transportation project is. In addition to more traditional efforts in traffic flow and transit improvements, CMAQ supports new and effective projects focusing on vehicles and fuels. The establishment of inspection and maintenance (I/M) programs -- estimated to reduce emissions by as much as 28 percent -- and the conversion of public fleets to cleaner fuels are eligible program activities. In the program's first three years, CMAQ funds were used to finance I/M-related activities in Indiana, Wisconsin, New Jersey, New York, Louisiana, and the District of Columbia. Several other states are contemplating similar uses.

Some CMAQ projects simply would not be possible under past -- or even other present -- funding programs. In Boston, CMAQ funds are being used to purchase electric vehicles and demonstrate their utility for travel to transit stations. This project shows that it is possible to completely eliminate the "cold start" problem -- the high emissions level caused by a cold engine -- associated with park-and-ride lots. Program funds are also being used to finance an

intermodal service that transports freight from railroad cars in New York to a barge traveling to New Jersey. This service removes 54,000 truck trips annually from congested streets in New York City.

ISTEA recognized the benefit of promoting alternatives to single-occupant vehicle travel. In 1992 and 1993, more than \$88 million in CMAQ funds were used to establish or expand shared-ride services; promote demand management strategies and employer trip-reduction programs; and support bicycle and pedestrian travel through better routes, sidewalks, and storage facilities.

Early in the program's life, serious concerns were raised that expenditures under CMAQ would lag behind the more traditional funding programs of STP and the National Highway System (NHS) under congressional spending limits. The fear was that states would spend up to their limits on traditional highway projects and would only as a last resort use CMAQ funds for some of the more innovative -- or "risky" -- projects.

In 1992, only \$340 million of \$809 million (42 percent) was obligated under CMAQ, but in 1993, this figure rose to \$600 million. By 1994, the CMAQ obligation rate soared to 85 percent (\$815 million of \$962 million available). In just three years, the Federal Highway Administration had reached its goal to expend CMAQ funds at levels roughly comparable to the overall limitation (91.1 percent of authorized funds in 1994). CMAQ dollars now compete on a relatively even basis with the much larger STP (\$24 billion) and NHS (\$21 billion) programs.

CMAQ has consistently been a front-runner in meeting other ISTEA goals. These funds must be used for projects in "nonattainment" areas -- areas failing to meet the national air-quality standards -- under the Clean Air Act. The nonattainment areas roughly correspond to our nation's urban areas. Thus, the CMAQ program was poised to better fulfill ISTEA's goal of decentralization and MPO empowerment.

According to a review of CMAQ conducted jointly by FHWA, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) during the summer of 1994, decentralization is taking hold. For the first time, state and local air-quality agencies have direct input into transportation planning. In many nonattainment areas, MPOs have developed strong local processes to develop plans and funding priorities to directly address their needs. The states in which these MPOs are located have become willing partners, ceding some of their traditional authority.

Moreover, many of the MPOs themselves have taken steps to invite new players -- environmental groups, bicycle advocates, and rideshare organizations -- to the table. In Chicago, for example, the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation is a member of the MPO advisory group and has been very successful in securing CMAQ funds. More than \$11 million has been spent on projects to improve bicycle transportation in the city.

A Work in Progress

The CMAQ program has been in the forefront of ISTEA's effort to refocus the transportation planning process toward intermodalism. It is, by its nature, multimodal. It is a virtual requirement that other players, in addition to the highway and transit communities, be a part of its implementation. CMAQ's success in meeting the congressional mandates of ISTEA is documented in unprecedented flexibility and robust spending rates.

This success is to the credit of the many state, city, county, regional, and public interest groups that have worked hard to realize its potential. Further strides are still necessary. New players mean more coordination; more coordination means more meetings; and more meetings mean a great deal of time and effort. We need to continue the struggle to find better ways to smooth this process. While overall there has been a great measure of success, some states and MPOs remain frustrated by lengthy administrative procedures, a lack of staff, cumbersome organizational structures, and even restrictive state laws. Federal agencies need to assist them in their struggle by providing clear and timely direction in this great experiment.

Lincoln, Neb.: Heated Pedestrian Viaduct

Want to keep the ice and snow off your walkway? Just turn up the heat. It sounds like a weary snow shoveler's daydream, but it's a reality in wintry Lincoln, Neb., where ISTEA funds helped construct the nation's first heated pedestrian bridge. The 170-m-long viaduct is located just north of the central business district and adjacent to the campus of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln (UNL) and provides access to UNL for both pedestrians and bicyclists. The hydronic bridge heating system includes a gas boiler that heats a propyleneglycol-water solution. The solution is pumped on cue through hoses encased in the deck of the viaduct, keeping the concrete deck surface warm enough to prevent the accumulation of snow and ice. Automatic operation of the system is accomplished by moisture and temperature sensors.

Maryland: BWI Bike Trail

When you think about airport transportation, bicycles don't usually come to mind. But a 23-km bike trail circling Baltimore-Washington International Airport (BWI) is the centerpiece of a unique intermodal project that was the first transportation enhancement project to receive FHWA funding under ISTEA. When the BWI Trail is completed in 1998, it will link five modes of transportation: rail, transit, highways, aviation, and bicycle-pedestrian facilities. It will connect communities around the airport with the Linthicum Light Rail Station to the north, the Baltimore & Annapolis Trail to the east, and an Amtrak station and Patapsco State Park to the west.

The trail, whose development has involved close partnerships among five state and county agencies and numerous community groups, is already serving to link communities and neighborhoods and to create new options for commuters. The 10-m-wide trail, made of asphalt and wooden boardwalks, is separate from roadways for most of its route, winding through woodlands and residential areas, around wetlands, and across scenic overlooks. Lou Maddox, a member of the board of directors of the Glen Burnie Improvement Association, says, "The new trail connects communities the way railroads did. But unlike the railroads, you don't have to board at the station. You can get onto the trail right from your home or from a busy street."