

Proposed New Entrance to UAF at Geist and Loftus Road

To: Chancellor Joan K. Wadlow

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

Date: January 15, 1999

Subject: MPC Recommendations Related to the DOT's Proposed New Entrance to UAF at Geist and Loftus Road

The MPC's obligation and objective are to recommend and support an overall plan for traffic movement on the UAF campus. This naturally includes four key issues: prominence of entrances, easy access to the campus, ease of motion within the campus, subject to pedestrian priorities, and limitations on use of the campus road system as shortcuts for other traffic. The MPC does not see these objectives as being greatly forwarded by the series of seemingly piecemeal improvements being undertaken and/or being considered. It would like to see the DOT and Facilities Services combine their means and objectives to gain a more comprehensive solution that clearly addresses the four issues.

The MPC is seriously concerned about the underlying motivations and planning for the Loftus Road project in that UAF is not the obvious principal beneficiary of the new entrance as presently envisioned by the DOT. That is the School District, which in essence has hijacked Fairbanks Street and taken from UAF the entrance with the greatest potential for a MAIN entrance to the campus, certainly in its potential for visual impact. Hence,

Recommendation

The Master Planning Committee recommends that DOT be required to address the following question: Did the DOT fully consider the option shown in the 1991 Master Plan between pages 62 and 63, titled "Proposed Vehicular Circulation," or alternatives based on it? That is, retain Fairbanks Street as the entrance to UAF, straighten the road, place the new bridge as needed, and then UAF and DOT jointly solve the traffic congestion problems due to two converging entrances (off Fairbanks Street and College Road) and the infamous "malfunction junction" at Lola Tilly Commons. If the answer is yes, what were the reasons for rejecting any such options, and if no, why not? [MPC recommendation "Loftus 1/15/99/1"]

Footprints of several of DOT proposed options indicate that the DOT took into account the present plan's zoning of the area south of the railroad tracks; the Master Plan was consulted. We understand that the Master Plan's proposed option is not well developed, but it could not have been included in the '91 Master Plan without some serious consideration somewhere. It should be seriously considered now. We encourage DOT and Facilities Services to work together in a new design effort. Further, we support the use of roundabouts as a viable mechanism. However, their use places greater obligations on the DOT and Facilities Services to take care in planning for the movement of pedestrian and bicycle traffic, as two examples. A new design may also impact the existing design for the upper part of the College Road entrance. The traffic problem is compounded by the as yet underdeveloped potential of the North Tanana Loop entrance.

The MPC also realizes that it must respond to the existing DOT options, though the committee is not currently enthused about the options and the manner in which the DOT has brought the designs to this point of development. Hence:

Recommendation

Of the DOT's proposed options for a new entrance from the intersection of Geist and Loftus Road, the MPC sees no option of worth other than that identified as Location 3 (light blue line) in diagram UAF/New Geist Road Access, STP-0002(90)/60395 used at the Public Open House on November 19, 1998. [MPC recommendation "Loftus 1/15/99/2"]

There are several issues associated with a Loftus Road entrance that are independent of the particular route and lead to the following recommendation.

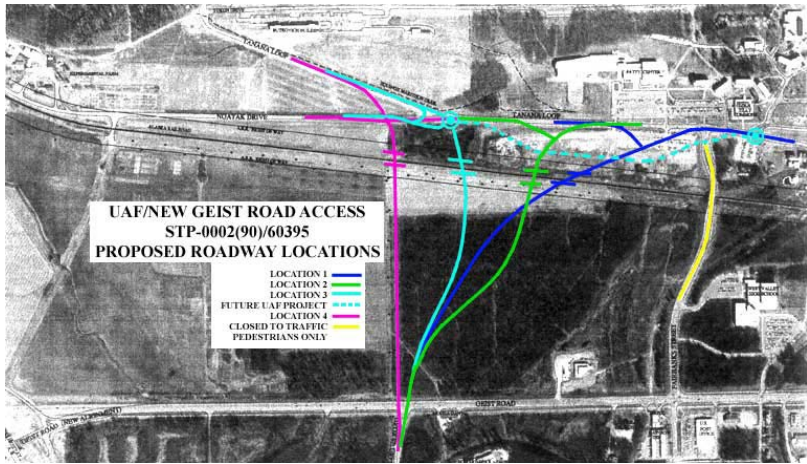
Recommendation

Facilities Services should be instructed to work with the DOT to include a pull-out area to an information center and campus map as part of a new entrance from the intersection of Geist and Loftus Road. The design should be consistent with any designs that may result for an improved entrance at the intersection of University Avenue and College Road, as per MPC recommends submitted separately. Future reconstruction of Geist Road may limit access to the Harper Building. Facilities Services should be instructed to work with the DOT to include plans for access to the Harper Building from the new entrance road. Designs for access trails and viewing areas associated with the agricultural fields to the west of the entrance road should be considered as part of these activity. [MPC recommendation "Loftus 1/15/99/3"]

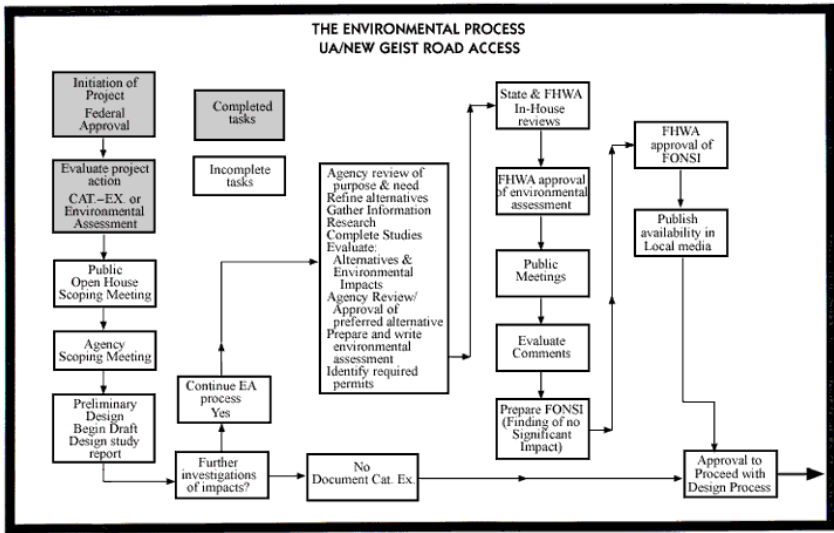
The Loftus Road option connects the Loftus Road entrance to Tanana Loop west of the SRC and east of the present Noatak Drive intersection with Tanana Loop. Some adjustments to this location can be expected as the design effort progresses. This clearly has the potential for moving some part of the West Ridge traffic away from the main campus area. Difficulties introduced include the following: emergency response time for 22,000 people outside the UAF campus that will have to be mitigated; and a substantial alteration of currently undeveloped land. The latter point may be of concern at the federal level during their review. Concern was also expressed about increased traffic near University Park Elementary School via Birch Lane as local traffic in that part of town becomes redirected towards UAF from Loftus Road instead of Fairbanks Street. We have not been provided any kind of traffic study that addresses the numerous question of overall traffic flow on and off campus before the revisions and after the entire set of proposed revisions is completed. This contributes to the MPC's ambivalence towards the series of seemingly piecemeal improvements.

Ultimately, the MPC is concerned that several major projects are being initiated which will have significant impact on the campus traffic flow, but the projects are occurring independently of each other. The College Road project was approved with little input from the University; we are about to let a bid on the "malfunction junction" change; both the College Road entrance and the junction should be tied directly to whatever plan is approved to rectify the bridge problem. From our perspective, none of this is coming together in a cohesive fashion. Consequently, we are up against that dilemma of being told there is money to spend, but not having a good, solid design. We need to do this right, and there does not appear to be a member of the committee who would sign off on the plans as they are being presented today.

DOT Proposed Roadway Locations



- Environmental Process Flow chart



- [Design Process Flow Chart](#)

