

To: City of Albuquerque City Council

From: Greater Albuquerque Active Transportation Committee

Re: Street Planning for 4<sup>th</sup> Street between Menaul and Candelaria

The Greater Albuquerque Active Transportation Committee (GAATC) advises the City on the promotion of equitable, safe, and accessible active transportation for Albuquerque. The City of Albuquerque has made notable progress in this area, including the creation of an extensive system of pedestrian and cycling trails including hundreds of miles of bikeways, bike paths, walking trails, bike lanes, and bike boulevards.

However, as the largest city in a state with the highest per-capita pedestrian fatality rate in the United States for the past 7 years [1], remaining focused on safety is critical. Beyond the horrifying toll of death and injury, the lack of safety on our streets has important ramifications in terms of equity, economic development, environmental degradation, and the 'livability' of Albuquerque. For Albuquerque to be an economically viable, desirable place to live, for businesses to flourish, and for people to be safe, the city needs to shift its focus to prioritizing increased safety and access for pedestrians, bicycles, and other active modes of transportation in all improvements, while slowing car traffic, and reducing street space allocated to parking and other vehicle infrastructure. **This focus must be applied to every new road infrastructure project, including re-stripping projects.** To ensure this and future projects meet the goals of GAATC and of the citizens, we help to represent, GAATC strongly recommends revisiting and revising the 4<sup>th</sup> Street plan between Menaul and Candelaria to provide safe bike lanes for cyclists in both directions.

The North Valley is the heart of historic Albuquerque, with small lots, dense housing and multiple side streets. This pre-WW2 style of development is ideal for re-creating a vibrant commercial area attracting customers on foot and bike from the area. Increasing the availability of **safe and accessible** pedestrian and bicycle space in this section of town is crucial and **will very likely amplify (not impede) economic development, livability, and desirability in this area, whereas increasing land allocated for parking will do the opposite.** Despite this data-driven and citizen supported supposition, the current Bohannon Huston Inc conceptual plan for re-stripping neglects to provide safe space for bicycles and misses opportunities to increase safety for pedestrians in favor of increasing on-street parking. Importantly, while the desire for on-street parking is motivated by important concerns from businesses and neighbors, on-street parking will actually result in the opposite effect that these stakeholders are hoping for. Conversely, using road space for buffered bike lanes will help to serve those interests and:

- Provide cyclist access to businesses.
- Discourage cyclists from riding in the traffic lane, which is their right but is dangerous for the cyclist and frustrating for motorists.
- Discourage cyclists from riding on sidewalks and endangering pedestrians.
- Provide a buffer from car traffic for pedestrians.

- Provides a safe continuation for cyclists traveling on the 2nd St bike path which ends where Alameda Drain turns east/west.

Another aspect of the plan of great concern to GAATC is the pedestrian plan. While GAATC lauds the BHI plan to slow traffic as a mechanism to improve pedestrian safety, more can and should be done. GAATC supports strengthening the focus on pedestrian safety, which could include increasing the frequency of crosswalks, and other restriping mechanisms.

The BHI conceptual plan includes a bulleted section titled “WHY PARKING INSTEAD OF BIKE LANES ON 4TH ST?” As GAATC’s charter is the promotion of active transportation, we feel it is necessary to refute each of the bulleted points in this section:

- *Not enough right-of-way for both parking and bike lanes*

The proposed road diet, which GAATC strongly supports leaves room for bike lanes. The addition of on-street parking is unnecessary, and may be counter productive, in a neighborhood that already has ample off-street parking (> 50% of the land use in the area), both in private lots along 4th and on adjacent side streets.

- *On-street parking encouraged in the following plans:*
  - *Comprehensive Plan*
    - *Main Street Corridor and Multi-Modal Corridor*
  - *Corridor Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Plan*
  - *All encourage on-street parking and walkability with less focus on bike facilities*

The Comprehensive Plan’s chapter on transportation contains 224 references to biking and bicycling. Walkability is also a common theme (64 references). With only 9 references, on-street parking is a mere afterthought.

The North Corridor Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Plan designates 4th street as both a Main Street Corridor (North of Alameda Drain) and a Multi-Modal Corridor.

For Main Street Corridors, Policy 6.1.5 (page 6-36) refers readers to Regional Bike Facility Plans. The MRCOG Long Range Bikeway System classifies 4th street as a “Potential **Bike** Facility”.

For Multi-Modal Corridors policy 6.1.7 (page 6-38) says, “Balance the competing needs of pedestrians, **bicyclists**, autos, and transit in street design and improvements by slowing auto traffic, minimizing curb cuts, and encouraging primary auto access to parking lots to be provided from intersecting streets... Accommodate all users, providing safety and mobility for pedestrians, **bicyclists**, and people with physical disabilities.”

- *Complete Streets Ordinance*
  - *Prioritize the comfort of multimodal users with traffic calming*

Cycling is a mode of transportation and cyclists are typically included in the discussion of “multimodal users” along with pedestrians and transit users.

- *Improve pedestrian experience*
  - *On-street parking will provide protection for people walking on the sidewalk*
  - *Provide more direct pedestrian access to local businesses and residential*

Bike lanes, especially if buffered or protected, also provide protection for people on sidewalks. If bike lanes are not provided, cyclists will be tempted to ride on the sidewalk, creating hazards for pedestrians. If cyclists choose to use the traffic lane (as is their right) they will slow car traffic and cause frustration for motorists. Local businesses will benefit from increased pedestrian and bicycle traffic encouraged by buffered bike lanes. Removal of on-street parking will not harm local businesses given the abundance of parking that already exists in the neighborhood.

- *No existing bike facilities on other segments of 4th St or at project termini – Candelaria and Menaul*
- *MRCOG Long Range Bikeway System*
  - *2nd St has “Proposed Buffered Bike Lane” (parallel facility)*
  - *2nd St has Alameda Drain Trail (north of study corridor)*
  - *4th St only classified as “Potential Bike Facility”*
- *Bicycle use on parallel corridor (2nd St)*
  - *Easy connectivity to 4th St*
    - *Current – north end along Alameda Drain Trail*
    - *Future – buffered bike lanes along 2nd Street*

The bike path on 2nd Street ends where the Alameda Drain turns east/west. Extremely high-speed traffic on 2nd Street endangers the lives of anyone cycling on 2nd Street from this point south. A cursory examination of the area shows no ROW on 2nd for the “future buffered bike lanes “. However, were bike lanes to be built on 4th from Alameda Drain to Menaul (the non-Main Street segment), this would provide an immediate safe path for cyclists today.

The current BHI plan will go far to improve pedestrian safety in the neighborhood, however, additional improvements are needed to meet the needs of residents, businesses, and neighbors. Pedestrian and cycling safety and accessibility, far more than on-street parking, will improve the economic development and livability of the neighborhood.

In closing, GAATC gives strongly recommends that BHI revise the plan to include buffered bike lanes and increase opportunities for pedestrian safety and additional restriping mechanisms.

Sincerely,

[1] <https://www.fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/States/StatesPedestrians.aspx>