



Tim Keller, Mayor

## Greater Albuquerque Active Transportation Committee (GAATC) – Minutes

Monday, February 14, 2022 | 4:00 – 6:00 PM



### Committee Members Present

Richard Meadows (Chair)

### Committee Members Absent

Nevarez Encinias

Josiah Hooten

Daniel Jensen

Lanny Tanning

### Staff Members Present

Tim Brown (DMD Traffic Engineering)

Whitney Phelan (Parks and Rec)

Cheryl Somerfeldt (Parks and Rec)

Carrie Barkhurst (ABQ RIDE)

Willy Simon (MRCOG/MRMPO)

Tara Cok (MRCOG/MRMPO)

Tom Menicucci (Council)

Valerie Hermanson (DMD)

### Visitors Present

Claude Morelli (University of New Mexico)

Dianne Cress (Bike ABQ)

Susan Hering (BikeABQ)

Peter Rice (Downtown ABQ News)

Theresa Dunn (BikeABQ)

Aaron Sussman (BHI)

**Richard Meadows called the meeting to order at 4:10 PM**

### Approval of February Meeting Agenda

- No quorum to approve agenda

### Approval of January Meeting Minutes

- No quorum to approve minutes



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### Public Comments (2-minute limit per audience member)

- No comments

### Discussion / Action Items

- No discussion/action items

### Presentations

- **Parks & Recreation Department Priority Projects** – City of Albuquerque Parks & Recreation Department - *DEFERRED*
- **Nob Hill Pedestrian and Quality of Life Study, Phase 1, Field Audit** – Claude Morelli, AICP, PTP University of New Mexico Department of Civil, Construction, and Environmental Engineering
  - Full presentation slides attached
  - History/Context: Nob Hill businesses and residents approached City Councilor Pat Davis and requested Councilor Davis to fund a study of pedestrian wayfinding and quality of life issues in the Nob Hill area. Since UNM is in the area, City Council staff approached them to see if they would be interested in completing a study like this. They agreed and also saw this as an opportunity to give students real world planning and research experience.
  - Study area boundaries: Girard Blvd, Campus Blvd and Copper Avenue, Washington Street, and Silver Avenue. Study also considering issues within the neighborhood itself and asking questions about how the neighborhood fits into the commercial area.
  - Purpose: Identify issues and opportunities to address transportation-related quality of life concerns through a research and data driven effort. Develop prioritized recommendations to improve multimodal circulation, wayfinding, and safety.
  - In addition to review/research of plans, rules, standards, guidance, national best practices, also conducted field audits in late 2021, to develop a deeper understanding of what it's like to be a pedestrian in 2021 in the Nob Hill area. But also thinking about bikes, transit, motorists parking etc. and how they impact pedestrians and how pedestrians impact them.
  - Scoring rubric: Mix of technical measurements and subjective evaluation. Three study members participated in the field audit and each graded separately then the group convened to discuss their grades and reached consensus. From here they converted the average score back into a letter grade.
  - Exploratory surveys – one focused on neighbors and the other on businesses. Did not have resources to survey all residents, so team asked neighborhood leadership who would be best to complete the survey. Business surveys is all the Main Street business owners or their managers. Created weighting for survey responses to be able to create a prioritized list.



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- Neighborhood Survey – a few findings: Highest rated problematic conditions common to all scoring systems shown (see presentation pg. 27):
  - People driving too fast
  - Tripping hazards along sidewalks
  - Lack of safe, protected crosswalks
  - Lack of shade
  - Curb ramps that are too steep
  - Steep slopes where driveways cross sidewalks
- Business Survey – a few findings: Highest rated problematic conditions common to all scoring systems shown (see presentation pg. 28):
  - Panhandling or public disturbances
  - Fear of crime
  - People driving too fast
  - Noise from motor vehicles (engines, music, etc.)
  - Not enough safe, protected crosswalks
  - Lack of shade
  - Tripping hazards along sidewalks
  - Rough or uneven pavement at crosswalks
  - Other items blocking sidewalks
  - Steep slopes where driveways cross sidewalks
- Next Steps: Phase 2: Finalize and present case study research on similar BRT corridors  
Phase 3: Prepare issues and opportunities report  
Phase 4: Prepare list of tiered recommendations
- **Discussion**
  - Richard M: With survey responses, did any of the neighbors or businesses identify as having a disability?
    - Claude M: This was explicitly asked in the survey. None of the neighbors that completed the survey said they had a disability. However, some of the neighbors did have a family member in the household that may have had a disability or used an assistive device.
  - Richard M: Was lighting on of the list of things considered?
    - Claude M: Not so much in neighborhood as along Central. Streets in this area are typically residential and then become more commercial within a block or two of Central. Silver, Copper, and Campus are some of the streets where the lighting issue is most problematic.
  - Richard M: Does the study area include Silver and Copper? Guests in attendance of the meeting tonight might see conflicts for cyclists.
    - Claude M: The formal study area includes the south side of Silver (properties facing Silver) and this is the same for Copper, Campus, Monte Vista.
  - Richard M: I wanted to mention that since Albuquerque Rapid Transit (ART) was completed, there have been some other improvements like the new HAWK signal recently added. Also, some narrow medians were added that were not there previously.
    - Claude M: A HAWK went in near Flying Star while we were completing this study. Also, kudos to Tim or whoever constructed the pedestrian accommodation in the construction zone because compared to 20 years when I had done a study of this, it was quite good.



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Monday, February 14, 2022 | 4:00 – 6:00 PM

- Tim B: Kudos go to Brian Wolfe in the Construction Services Division.
- Susan H: Thank you. Great study. Hope we get to apply the information from this study to different neighborhoods. What exactly is a curb ramp?
  - Claude M: Curb ramp was not defined in the survey. Some people thought of curb ramp at end of a crosswalk with the little bumps or truncated domes. That's a curb ramp. But some people might also confuse curb ramps with the aprons on either side of a driveway with a steep slope but do not serve people with a disability. Great question and wish we would have defined curb ramp.
- Susan H: In the pedestrian collision data there was a reference about conflicts with bikes. How did you define a bike conflict?
  - Claude M: Very important question. It's especially important because in other cities where there are a lot of micromobility devices such as bikes and e-scooters, we are seeing a lot of collisions between those devices and pedestrians. There's a huge literature in public health on this. Those collisions typically are very serious and it has to do with the speed of travel of those vehicles because that's where the energy is coming from – speed. So when we define a conflict, it's basically any wheeled vehicle versus a pedestrian (other than a legal to operate vehicle on a sidewalk like a wheelchair or a scooter used as a mobility assistive device). So if a person rides a bicycle on a sidewalk and going slowly, no will care, but if someone is going fast and hits someone, that's a pretty serious collision. Especially if the person is older or a child. So bikes and pedestrians do not mix well when bicyclists are traveling at high speeds.

And Central Ave only has so much room and with the bus rapid transit. There are two travel lanes, parking lanes, sidewalk, and the space needed for curb ramps, so where do bikes go on Central? The good news is that Copper and Silver act as parallel routes, but the farther away you get from Carlisle the less utility they have because Central is running diagonal, so Copper gets farther away and Silver disappears east of Carlisle. Copper becomes Campus and so there is no good parallel route on the north side. And how do we solve this without taking lanes from someone else on Central? It's a real challenge. We looked at the possibility of using alleys, but they are not continuous. Bicyclists could ride in the street with traffic, but not all people are comfortable with that and there is a problem bicyclists getting doored by people in parked cars. There is not a lot of room on Central.
- Theresa D: Maybe this is a stupid thing to throw out, but I thought I'd throw it out. When you mentioned all these things you're looking at within the study, is one of the alternatives to not have private car traffic on Central and leave it to the other modes such as pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit? Was this considered?
  - Claude M: This idea has come up, however, eliminating private car traffic on Central means that the traffic has to go somewhere. For example, it's like pushing on the side of a balloon and the pressure has to go somewhere. Business would not be happy because they see number of people in cars as people being able to reach their business.

The study doesn't want to close any options, so if GAATC wrote a letter to the project team requesting that the project team consider this option, the project team could weigh the pros/cons at a modest level - at least weigh it. But I anticipate that the businesses would not support that option. When ART went in, some of that traffic likely migrated to adjacent roadways such as Lead/Coal then compounded by other challenges such as drag racing, they might be in support of this. It's an idea worth



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thinking about but not sure that politically it could happen. It's a big ask and the City would have to weigh pros/cons.

- Theresa D: I can see the political implications. But many cities that close streets to cars have seen businesses prosper more. Because cars can park other places and it's nicer for people to be a pedestrian in those areas and ride your bike in those areas. I understand how it would be hard to sell a business on this option.
  - Claude M: There are several recurring events throughout the year in which Central is temporarily closed to car traffic such as Summer Fest or Shop n' Stroll.
  - Richard M: It's a great question, but I've seen so many places that have closed streets to car traffic and where it hasn't worked. I grew up in Las Cruces where they closed Main Street to car traffic and it killed downtown. Albuquerque also tried on 4<sup>th</sup> Street in downtown and it didn't work, so the City put it back to a street for cars. Denver's 16<sup>th</sup> Street maybe more successful.
  - Claude M: Yes, 16<sup>th</sup> Street in Denver seems successful, but it also has 100K people in offices or housing surrounding it. Boulder's Pearl Street Mall seems to work because it's a university town. Or in Charlottesville, VA, the University of Virginia campus is closed for pedestrians. It seems like closing streets permanently to cars seems to work right next to universities and not as much on through routes, but side routes.
- Susan H: I think this would be hard to present to businesses yet their top concerns had more to do with issues with cars, better crosswalks. All had a lot more to do with encouraging pedestrians, but the comments about cars were about cars going too fast, making too much noise and everything else was more crosswalks, better ramps/driveways, more shade. Everything they wanted was something that encouraged pedestrians because it's a pedestrian you have to be to walk into a shop. You know at some point you park your car and become a pedestrian. It's interesting that they said all these things that are pedestrian friendly and I like a lot and I couldn't resist pointing that out, but I also grew up in Boulder, Madison, and Denver.
- Willy S: More of a comment and it's an interesting study. Thank you for doing it and thank you for presenting it. I think in most of our conceptions of Albuquerque and when we think of where it's safe and friendly to walk, many of us would think of this study area, but I agree with the results shared. Seeing how Central scored in this study you can help but wonder how a walkability study on Montgomery, Menaul, or Coors would be and what the results of that would be.
- I have another comment about lane reduction related to the lane reduction conversation that was just happening. MRCOG completes traffic counts and we've been monitoring the traffic there. We looked into the traffic on Central and it was interesting. We noticed that traffic has gone down on Central 40-50% on some segments and in Nob Hill in some cases. We also monitor alternative routes that we think people would use instead of Central and some of them have gone up, but they haven't gone up by the amount that Central went down. There are trips on Central that we don't know what happened to them and I looked into this in other cities that have done similar capacity reductions. They also found that a certain amount of traffic seems to kind of just go away and it's not accounted for. Wanted to throw that out there.
- Claude M: I'm thinking back to my days in ABQ when I was 16 and there was nothing to do, so we spent a lot of time cruising and I think of Central Avenue. It's the kind of street where there is a lot of cruising. I wonder if some of that traffic went away. It would be interesting to look at time variations when the traffic went away and did it go away during the journey to



Tim Keller, Mayor

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Monday, February 14, 2022 | 4:00 – 6:00 PM



work times or other times or on Friday nights. The other thing is traffic can be connected to other things such as business activity and business activities have gone down in Nob Hill so you would expect traffic counts to go down as well. Some food for thought.

- Richard M: Does MRCOG count pedestrians? Is there a way to see if pedestrian trips are coming back on Central?
- Willy S: We do, but they're not quite at the level as the traffic count program so we can't count every single segment of the city. But we do have an established schedule for collecting bike/ped counts. This is actually Tara's realm, so I can let her speak to it.
- Tara C: Willy said it well. Yes, we have the ability to collect bike/ped counts through a video camera. It's upon request, so if Claude would like some counts completed, feel free to reach out.

## Staff Reports

- Municipal Development (DMD) (Tim)
  - Nothing to report at this time, but may have some updates in the next month or two. Working on minor infrastructure projects.
- Council Services (Tom)
  - No report.
- ABQ RIDE (Carrie)
  - Read January GAATC meeting minutes and noticed that there was public comment from someone who shared a city bus driver yelled at them while they were bicycling on Central Ave. Thinks that it's likely a Route 66 driver since that route drives in the right lane and assuming the bicyclist was biking in the right lane as well. Checked City Traffic Code – it's legal for bicyclists to travel on all city streets whether or not there is a bike lane. Motor vehicles must give five (5) feet when passing a cyclist. On Central, can see how there would be conflicts. City working toward identifying and dedicating parallel facilities that are more comfortable to ride on such as Silver or Copper. However, it doesn't mean you cannot ride on Central.
  - Met with Transit staff who train the bus drivers and he said there are two things worth noting. They have a program for new drivers that covers pedestrian and bike awareness. Also, there is a driver's manual of rules that they go over rule by rule and that drivers all have their own copy. The manual points out that drivers need to show consideration when they're passing by cyclists and pedestrians especially if there's rain or slush on roadway to be a courteous driver. There's also a rule to be alert for bike riders and use extreme caution when bicyclists are nearby – cites that 5 ft. law for passing cyclists. It states: Never intimidate or harass a bicyclist. It's something that transit takes seriously and in the future, anyone who observes this, please report to 311 because all buses have multiple cameras so staff can investigate. Drivers are held accountable, so if any issues are found, it may mean disciplinary actions or additional training.

Richard M: With the shortage of bus drivers, we're seeing smaller vans or Sun Vans. On my route it's a Sun Van but it doesn't have bike rack. Can we bring bikes on the Sun Van?



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Monday, February 14, 2022 | 4:00 – 6:00 PM



Carrie: It's the bus driver's discretion and it also depends on how full the bus is. Noted that it can be a challenge for bicycle riders to use those buses. It can also be difficult for people with assistive devices to be able to board the bus.

If anyone has any thoughts or preferences on the bus type, calling 311 is a good way to share your thoughts. Call 311 and say that you would like to leave a comment for the transit department and we will receive it.

- Vision Zero (Val)
  - Tomorrow on February 15 at 9 am there will be a virtual public hearing for Proposed Rulemaking for Automated Speed Enforcement. It's important to note that the rulemaking is only about the proposed rules and not to discuss the program.

Additional information can be found here: <https://www.cabq.gov/clerk/news/notice-of-proposed-rulemaking-6>

Public comment can be provided at the hearing or can be submitted in writing to [DMDRuleMaking@cabq.gov](mailto:DMDRuleMaking@cabq.gov)

- MRCOG/MRMPO (Tara Cok/Willy Simon)
  - Created Safety Visualization for the Region – MRCOG Roadway Safety and Crash Report (2015 – 2019):  
<https://mrmppo.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=ec395f5587744d778832207af7d86f93>
  - Important to note these data and maps are for the entire MRCOG region and the maps were completed before the 2020 crash data was available. There were some changes to the crash data in 2020, so staff are working to harmonize those changes so that all data sets are consistent. Staff hope to update this annually as new crash data is received and analyzed.
  - Segments are crashes per mile in that five year time frame (2015 – 2019).
  - # of people killed are multiplied by two to weight this factor.
  - HFIN score – think of this as crashes per mile, which can be compared to streets throughout the region.
  - One quirk of the data set. If there is a fatal crash at an intersection that data is shared by each leg of the intersection. When reviewing, please do not sum the number of killed at intersection for each leg. We were not sure how to attribute it, so we attribute to each leg. Still a good way to look at links regionally.
  - Theresa D: Where does data come from?
    - Willy S: NMDOT contracts with UNM GSP who collects all uniform crash reports completed statewide by APD/Bernalillo County Sheriff/Rio Rancho PD/etc. UNM GSP then essentially places a dot on a map for where a crash/incident occurs along with the other information collected about the crash/incident. Then NMDOT provides these data to MRCOG for further analysis.



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Monday, February 14, 2022 | 4:00 – 6:00 PM



- Susan H: Why has there been trouble adding the 2020 data and how often do you will this be updated?
  - Willy S: MROCG hopes to update it each year. It's important to note there is a two year delay in receiving these data. For example, in January 2022 received 2020 data. Past crash datasets have a category called the Top Contributing Factor, which identifies that top contributing factor for why a crash or incident occurred. In the 2020 dataset, this category has been removed and there is a new category that is similar but does not match with previous crash data, so it's not apples to apples. Staff are working through to understand this change, so that the new data can be added. Unsure of why there was this change with the data.
  - Richard M: Each state has a different approach with crash data.

**Meeting adjourned at 5:28 PM**

**Next Meeting: March 14, 4:00pm – 6:00pm**