

Comments Of General Concern Expressed Regarding I-30

I-30 Crossing Concerns

Baxter Reecer [baxter@fennellpurifoy.com]

Sent: Thursday, May 5, 2016 2:22 PM

To: Allen Skaggs

To whom it may concern:

These comments and information are submitted to oppose the current plans for the expansion of the freeway through downtown Little Rock and the urban portion of the I-30 corridor.

1. The Smart Mobility report studied the corridor and the traffic studies put forward by AHTD and found them to be flawed both in statistical approach and the interpretation of the results. Essentially, the growth in traffic congestion AHTD projected is the "induced demand" effect of adding freeway lanes. It has been proved accurate across the country that adding freeway lanes increases traffic and that you cannot build your out of congestion. The Katy Freeway in Houston is a prime example.
2. The report also indicates that Metroplan's Imagine Central Arkansas report shows that diffusing traffic and improving arterial and local streets is a much better way to address future growth and managing congestion.
3. The cost of AHTD's current plan is a huge expense that would be better used to improve local connections including a Chester Street bridge. AHTD has said that a Chester Street bridge would not help congestion because it would only carry a small percentage of the traffic. This is not true according to modeling currently being done. A Chester Street bridge would, in fact, carry a great deal of traffic especially during rush hour and would take a good deal of the load off the I-30 corridor. Enough load would be taken off the I-30 corridor that additional freeway lanes would not be necessary. The economic impact for Pike Avenue of a Chester crossing cannot be underestimated. It is a natural route to North Little Rock and I-40, as well as already being an arterial-sized avenue for most of its length.
4. What has been proven in almost every case is that if you widen one section of urban freeway you inevitably have to widen the rest of the system to stay ahead of congestion caused by induced demand. The estimated cost of the I-30 Crossing project is now at \$671 million. AHTD already has expansion plans on the boards for I-30 South, I-630, and will have to widen sections of I-40 as well. We are talking as much as \$2 to \$3 billion for this work. We are not a rich enough state to pay for this. There is not an income source to satisfy this demand even if all the state highway monies are used in Little Rock and nowhere else.
5. Finally, work is being done by Smart Mobility to find the best possible solution and outcome for the I-30 Corridor. It appears from early modeling that a true boulevard with on-grade connections coupled with arterial improvements and a Chester Street bridge actually out-performs the AHTD plan long term and would be cheaper than an expanded 10 lane freeway - and not just for downtown but for commuters as well. You get the kind of future you plan for, so do we want to continue to pour all our resources into an endless freeway project? Or do we want to be smart and position our region for intelligent growth in the future?

Thank you,

Baxter Reecer, AIA

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Freeway expansion

Linda Walker

Sent:Friday, May 6, 2016 1:59 PM

To: Allen Skaggs

I would very much like to position our area for smart growth regarding freeway expansion. Recent history has shown us very clearly that mindless freeway expansion results in tearing communities apart--both physically and psychologically. Please, let us actually learn from the previous generation of mistakes made in highway construction and approach this in a thoughtful, research based manner. The funding for this construction comes from our mutual taxes---let us arrive at the decisions in an environment of mutual respect, with an eye to known lessons on how to expand with minimal repercussions.

--

Linda Walker

Concerns about I-30 in Benton changes

Sent:Friday, May 6, 2016 11:41 AM

To: Allen Skaggs

I attended the December "hearing" where we learned we were going to accept the "changes" to the I-30 network in Benton. I have been encouraged to file my concerns here after keeping them quiet.

The roundabout at Exit 114 sounds like a great idea. The off-ramp situation due to the location of the exchange is often a dangerous experience.

The call to upgrade the bridges across the Saline River sound like reasonable outcomes. I was informed at the "hearing" that they were in excess of 50 years old and built for an era that saw lighter truck and car traffic, and use.

However, I continue to use "hearing" because we were informed there would be people receptive to ideas. There were people. They weren't very receptive. In fact, we came to understand that the word "hearing" was misleading. The plans were made and it was up to the rest of us to accept them.

After some independent work of my own, I proffer the following conclusions:

* Cutting off Sevier Street from the frontage road is a mistake. Planners insisted it was a dangerous setup now to have Sevier Street connect with the frontage road. However, there are few accidents in this location. Also, there has been an education process of more than 50 years that this arrangement is locally acceptable. Thus, while I formerly thought it could be wise to cut off the street in the name of safety, without a safety concern in reality, it would appear that doing so is a solution in search of a problem. Further, there is no practical reason to cut off the main arterial to the county courthouse on Sevier Street downtown.

* There was a call to straighten a curve of I-30. I feel this would waste thousands of dollars. There is no need now to straighten the curve. The engineers felt it was prone to accidents. However, in talking with local residents, there isn't a high incidence of accidents here. In talking among ourselves, we the people of Benton find that straightening this curve likely will lead to higher speeds and more risk for the residents who live nearby. The curve is a waste of hard-earned tax dollars.

* Cost. There is an economic depression going on right now. Saline County total unemployment is 20.5 percent (ages 19-64, BLS and Census Bureau statistics). We shouldn't spend hard-earned tax dollars on straightening a curve which will wipe out several local businesses. Those business owners were present at the "hearing." It was apparent that the engineers present had not considered the local damage of this construction event to the local economy.

* Foresight. There is an intersection at U.S. 70 and I-30. There is no access from I-30 onto the frontage road here going toward Benton. If there was a frontage road here, the entire length of mile marker 112 to mile marker 114 could be opened up to an increased accessibility of commercial traffic. By failing to increase access to the existing frontage road system, we inhibit economic growth locally. I don't understand why straightening a curve is more important than growing our local economy in this regard.

* The South Street cloverleaf. I saw the plan for the cloverleaf. It threatens to wipe out existing businesses. Again, with no gain in vehicle lanes and familiarity with the local public, what is to be gained by killing local business at the expense of widening the right of way?

Thank you for letting me express my opinion.

John J. Archibald
Benton, Ark.

cc: file

Metroplan

Dupuy, Linda

Sent: Friday, May 6, 2016 2:42 PM

To: Allen Skaggs

I am sharing my Facebook post below with you in the hopes that one voice will matter when added to many. Please be sure to consider all options. Taking the political path of least resistance does not always serve the community best. I urge you to support the downtown revitalization. I reluctantly moved to Arkansas in 1980. I had childhood memories of the newscasts from the 1957 crisis at Central High. To this Californian, Arkansas meant moving to the last place in the world I would ever want to live (the choice was out of my hands). In my most recent work at the UAMS College of Medicine, I became aware that many out-of-state residents had a similar perception of this state. Therefore, I began a Friday nite event that occurred before their Saturday morning interview day. I purposefully partnered with the Peabody and subsequently the Marriott. I promoted the downtown area for their visit to provide them insight into what the state/city had to offer that was beyond the national reputation. I tracked their postings on national premed websites. It made a drastic difference for us! Don't lose this opportunity to change the national reputation of this state through the revitalization process. Thank you for reading.

Linda DuPuy

This is a fascinating discussion. Hey, med students: this is your nightlife and weekend stomping grounds. I moved downtown two years ago. Never dreamed I would though. Just yesterday, I walked with my 5-month old great granddaughter to the Junction Bridge and marveled that I felt safe in so doing. I remember years ago when I lived in NLR and prohibited my then-teen daughters from going to "downtown Little Rock" because it wasn't safe. Downtown is following the path I learned about some 45+ years ago in my first sociology class. Downtown areas implode. People move out and away in concentric circles. Eventually, people find their way back and revitalization occurs: art, culture, music, sculpture, dance, symphony, theater, entertainment, bike lanes, walking paths, new history being made. Downtown is in the midst of this process. Renovation and revitalization brings tourists, conventions, events. We find our place on the map. Evenings and weekends invite you into the city, the streets, the ice cream parlors, the galleries. People nod at one another and gather to sit on blankets as music filters into the air. Let's not step backwards in Little Rock's downtown reawakening. Please consider letting your voice be heard before 5:00 p.m. today at comments@metroplan.org.

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I-30 widening

Rebecca McGraw

Sent:Friday, May 6, 2016 2:49 PM

To: Allen Skaggs

Instead of turning I-30 across the river into a mega-arterial, why not consider adding an additional bridge across the river? You know it's only going to get worse once the Broadway Bridge is taken down anyway, and a lot of people (like me) have already transitioned to taking the I-30 bridge already just to get used to the hassle of having to go that way eventually. A simple, not-too-fancy, cost-effective four-lane bridge connecting southern Pike Avenue to Highway 10 would go a long way to improve access to and from downtown, especially in bad weather or when there is a concert at Verizon tying things up, and would remove the local traffic from the Interstate.. It would also increase access between downtown Little Rock and North Little Rock, increasing economic viability in both areas.

I-30 is really only bad at rush hour, so spending a lot of money, hassle, and energy to make it wider all the time seems silly. Also, please don't remove the downtown ramps. I use those daily. Sixth street exit going south, Clinton Center on-ramp going north. Occasionally 2nd street going South if I need to return a library book before work. I can't imagine how awful getting to the Rivermarket area would be if the ramps were removed.

Best,

-Rebecca McGraw

Conway resident
Little Rock employee
North Little Rock native