

Chapter 5 Public Involvement

To ensure that the public contributed to this study and had full access to study results, a public involvement plan was prepared early in this project. The public involvement plan for this project included contact with numerous federal, state, and local agencies, utility companies, and residents and businesses potentially affected by the project.

Once the Federal Highway Administration approved the 1999 EA for public review, the Village of Los Ranchos scheduled a public hearing on the 4th Street Corridor EA. The hearing was held on January 11, 2000 at 6:00 PM at the Taft Middle School at 629 Schulte Road in Los Ranchos de Albuquerque, New Mexico. The EA for the proposed project was released for public review and comment on December 15, 1999. Copies of the EA were placed at the following area locations: 1) Village of Los Ranchos Village Hall, 6718 Rio Grande Boulevard, NW; 2) City of Albuquerque, North Valley Library, 7704 2nd Street, NW; 3) Wilson & Company, 4900 Lang Avenue, NE; and 4) on the world wide web page of the Village of Los Ranchos (www.villr.com and www.villageoflosranchos.com).

To encourage public participation, newspaper advertisements and direct mailing to business owners, residents, previous meeting attendees, and agencies were used. These announcements informed the public of the EA's availability, the locations where the EA was posted for review, the methods for submitting comments on the EA, and the time and place of the public hearing. The newspaper advertisement was published in the *Albuquerque Journal* on December 26, 1999, in *El Hispano News* on December 24, 1999, and in the January 2000 edition of the *Los Ranchos News*. A poster notice of the public hearing was displayed at eleven locations throughout the Village of Los Ranchos. Copies of the advertisements and a copy of the poster notice and posting locations may be found in Appendix D-1.

In addition to the advertisements, letters announcing the availability of the EA and the public hearing were mailed to business owners, residents, and agencies. Added to the mailing list were attendees of the previous public information meetings and open houses and anyone who had previously submitted comments. Appendix D-2 includes copies of the letter and the mailing list. Notification letters were mailed to agencies announcing the public hearing and soliciting comments on the EA (see Appendix D-3). In addition, a copy of the EA was provided to agencies that had participated in the study. Letters transmitting the EA to these agencies may be found in Appendix C-3. A total of 20 copies of the document were distributed to participating agencies. A handout was prepared for distribution at the public hearing that is included in Appendix D-4.

Comments were received during the public hearing and during the two-week comment period that proceeded the hearing. Wilson & Company has received 35 written comments concerning the 4th Street Corridor Study Environmental Assessment. Eight agency responses were received by Wilson & Company and are included in Appendix E.

Below is a summary of the written and verbal comments made at the public hearing and during the comment period. The greatest number of comments received on the EA were directed at the discussion on Alternatives Considered But Eliminated from Further Consideration. The intent of this section was to draw attention to the fact that a three-lane alternative was considered, to present our understanding of the public's attraction to such an alternative, and to present, in non-technical terms, additional information on some problems that may have resulted from the implementation of this alternative. This received the most criticism at the public hearing.

Written and Verbal Comments	Number of Times Mentioned	Detailed Comments
Supports 3-lane section	21	Do actual road test of 3-lane section; feel argument to dismiss 3-lane section weak.
General dissatisfaction with study	19	Unhappy with outcome of the study; believe its not in the best interest of the Village; improvements too big for Village's needs; will make things worse; unhappy with study procedures and process; suspect of preferred alternative selection; adverse impacts not properly identified; disagrees with project purpose and need; question validity/outcome of air quality analysis; concern that lack of public support ignored.
Supports Plaza alternative at 4 th /Osuna/Chavez (or modified Plaza)	10	Only fix intersection movements that don't work.
Parking	8	Concern about elimination of parking; replacement parking; allow on-street parking.
Bike facilities	7	Concerned about lack of bicycle facilities and bicycle accommodations on the southern end; no provisions for bike lanes on Osuna.
Improve pedestrian facilities	6	Provision of sidewalks with no separation unsafe; curb radii at intersections unsafe; address pedestrian improvements at 4 th & Solar.
Disagree with drainage improvements	5	Disagrees with proposed drainage improvements; disagree that drainage is a problem; drainage needs more consideration; underground storage of stormwater will remove land from commercial uses.
Concerns about traffic speed & roadway safety	4	
Enhance visual resources (landscaping)	3	
Disagrees that improvements would lead to economic stimulation or the current assessment of economic state	3	
Concerns about right-of-way acquisition	3	
Concerns about maintaining property access	3	Concern about median restrictions (northbound lefts) on 4 th Street.
Supports 5-lane section in the southern zone	3	One comment for 5-lane throughout.
Supports No Build Alternative in the northern zones	3	One comment for No Build throughout.
Supports No Build at the 4 th /Osuna/Chavez Intersection	3	
Supports aligning Osuna with Chavez	2	
Discourage "cut-through" traffic on side streets during intersection improvements	2	
Concerns about access to Northdale	2	
Opposes 5-lane section in the southern zone	2	
Supports 4-lane section with curb, gutter, sidewalk in northern zones	2	
Concerns about construction impacts to businesses	2	
Need drainage improvements	2	
Concerns about impact to historic Chavez property at the corner of 4 th & Chavez	2	
Remove utility poles	2	

Written and Verbal Comments	Number of Times Mentioned	Detailed Comments
Minimize lighting	2	
Need additional left turn lanes on 4 th & at intersections	2	
Consider equestrian crossings	1	
Consider portion of 4 th Street within unincorporated portion of Bernalillo County	1	
Concern about lack of input from Master Plan Committee	1	
Concern about maintenance at roundabout	1	
Opposes 4-lane section with curb, gutter, sidewalk	1	
Supports aligning Chavez with Osuna	1	
Concerns about increased traffic on Chavez	1	
Do sewer improvements before new road is constructed	1	
Eliminate left-turn capacity from Chavez	1	

During the hearing and comment period, extensive comments were presented that favored the three-lane section. Comments included doing an actual road test of 3-lane section and that the argument to dismiss 3-lane section weak. Commenters were generally unhappy with outcome of the study and believe it was not in the best interest of the Village. They thought the improvements were too big for Village's needs, will make a bad situation worse, and were generally unhappy with study procedures and process, suspect of preferred alternative selection, and concerned that lack of public support was ignored. In addition, a new Mayor and Trustees for the Village of Los Ranchos were elected in March 2000. As a result of public input and new Village leadership, many of the assessment criteria that eliminated the three-lane alternative from consideration were changed. The 3-Lane alternative is evaluated, analyzed, and presented in this reassessment as the preferred alternative.

Since previous public input from Village residents and businesses failed to result in a consensus that could provide the basis for implementation of the 1999 EA Preferred Alternative, a series of public charettes were held in the Spring and Summer of 2000. In these charettes, the Village of Los Ranchos, through its engineering consultant, Wilson & Company, selected Planners Ink and the firm's team of design and planning professionals to organize and facilitate public workshops to consider transportation improvements and enhancements along 4th Street. The main purpose of the workshops were to create an opportunity for intensive public involvement that would result in developing a preferred design alternative to recommend to the Village's governing body.

The following recommendations resulted from the workshops:

- A four-lane roadway north from Solar Road to El Paraiso Road that would include two lanes northbound; one lane southbound; left turn lanes; curb and gutter; and six-foot sidewalks planted with trees at regular intervals.
- A four-lane road from El Paraiso Road to Osuna Road that would be essentially the same as above except with wider 8-10 foot sidewalks on the east.
- A three-lane road north of Osuna Road to Schulte Road that would include one traffic lane in each direction; a center two-way left turn lane; 8-foot landscaped areas that may become parking lanes; curb and gutter; and 10-foot sidewalks with tree wells.

- A three-lane road from Schulte Road to Ortega Road designed to preserve a rural character that would include one traffic lane in each direction with a center two-way left turn lane; 6-foot bike lanes; 5-foot drainage swales; and 5-foot pedestrian pathway.

At a Village Board of Trustees' meeting in August 2000, a motion was passed to proceed with preliminary design of the 3-Lane Alternative and to examine the recommendations resulting from the workshops. These recommendations were the basis for the Preferred 3-Lane Alternative developed in this Reassessment.

Upon approval for release to the public by the Federal Highway Administration, the Environmental Reassessment will be made available for public review and comment. To facilitate public involvement, a public open house was held on February 15, 2001 and a public hearing will be held in the study area to explain the project and its environmental consequences. Comments received at the public hearing and during the 30-day review and comment period will be incorporated into an input synopsis prepared for this project. The input synopsis will be used to determine the final environmental clearance for the project.

Agency Comments

Eight comments on the 1999 EA were received from agencies. Copies of these comments are included in Appendix E. Most of the adverse comments were in regards to elimination of the 3-Lane alternative for analysis. This reassessment, that presents the 3-Lane alternative as the preferred alternative, addresses most of those concerns. The results of the air quality analysis and the Preferred 3-Lane alternative were presented to Transportation Conformity Technical Committee (TCTC) on February 8, 2001 (see letter in Appendix B). Representatives from the City of Albuquerque Public Works Department, Transit Department, Environmental Health Department, and Bernalillo County Public Works Department were present and were given an opportunity to comment on the new alternative. After discussion, the TCTC concluded that selecting a 3-Lane alternative would not constitute a significant change in the project scope, design, or timing, nor would there be a meaningful increase in carbon monoxide. No additional comments or questions were received from any of these agencies after this presentation.