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Council correctly OKs Grant Road alignment

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The Tucson City Council correctly accepted plans on Tuesday for the \$166 million, six-lane Grant Road widening project that was mandated by voters in the May 2006 Regional Transportation Authority election.

The new alignment is the result of more than a year of work by the Grant Road Citizens Task Force and the city's Department of Transportation, which based their recommendations and design on research and a tremendous amount of community feedback.

The planning was open, responsive, transparent and — although 20 speakers protested the project on Tuesday night — the resulting proposal has strong support among neighborhoods, businesses and other groups directly affected by the project.

After the proposal was revealed in October, the city held meetings to get still more public input, and more than 400 comments were submitted. Those comments led to still more tweaking of the alignment proposal.

As Councilwoman Shirley Scott said on Tuesday, "it should be clear to all present this has been a good process."

About 420 properties along Grant Road will be affected by the work, including about 150 that the city will buy. The city will need to take only a part of an additional 270 properties, the Star's Rob O'Dell reported Wednesday.

The new alignment will include six traffic lanes, sidewalks, medians, bike lanes and local access roads. It will run about five miles, from North Oracle Road to North Swan Road. Work will begin in 2013.

Councilman Steve Leal raised concerns Tuesday about the so-called "Michigan" left turns that will be installed at seven major intersections, O'Dell reported.

Drivers who want to go left from eastbound Grant onto, say, Campbell Avenue, will drive through the intersection at Campbell and into a U-turn lane controlled by a signal. They'll make a U-turn onto Grant heading westbound and then a right onto Campbell.

The design, which has been used successfully in Michigan, should reduce the time drivers spend stopped at those intersections. It also will reduce pedestrian-crossing distances. Because it will cut idling time, it should reduce gas use.

We will cast our lot with the task force and Transportation Department. We believe the plan is thorough, fair and will be a boon for traffic, neighborhoods and businesses along the Grant Road corridor.

The task force and city did their homework, solicited and studied vast amounts of public input and designed a plan that will serve Tucson well.

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