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Voice your views about Grant Road Improvement

Our view: Attend a community meeting or find out how you can get involved

There should be no whining about lack of public involvement in the design development of Grant Road between Oracle and Swan roads.

There will be plenty of opportunities to voice your views. We hope the public process for the Grant Road Improvement Plan will lead to productive community engagement.

The widening of Grant Road is one of the largest chunks of the Regional Transportation Authority plan, which got a green light from voters in May 2006.

The RTA project calls for six lanes, and that's about it. The final plan will be a balance between neighborhood goals and local business and transportation agency goals, said David D. Perkins of the engineering firm Kimley-Horn and Associates Inc.

The jackhammers start pounding in 2013 and construction will continue through 2018. Planning the roadway will take almost as long as the actual construction, which gives ample time for public input and to get Grant Road right. At this point in the process, the parties are creating a vision — not specifics — for the roadway.

Perkins explained during a media briefing Monday that the "Context Sensitive Solutions Approach to Transportation and Land Use Planning," developed by the Institute of Transportation Engineers, is being used. It's a flexible approach that balances community, environmental goals, safety and efficient transportation, Perkins said. There are no preconceived notions about Grant Road's alignment, its look, or how many businesses or homes will be affected.

The process for Grant Road could be one of the cures for our community's "civic disengagement" malady. As we said on this page Thursday, civic detachment creates a situation where "political and economic control of the city's future by default falls to a relatively small nucleus of natives or long-term residents."

Rick Kaneen of Kaneen Advertising and Public Relations Inc., which is handling communications for the project, said Monday that there will be opportunities for all who are interested in Grant Road. The public-involvement agenda includes surveys, public meetings, small meetings and a mobile resource center where plans and information will be available.

Anita C. Fonte, a civic involvement facilitator, said one strategy is a "conversation in a bag." Meeting supplies and information are packed into one bag enabling meetings with groups of eight to 10 people.

An ambitious plan for community involvement in the Grant Road widening has been laid. As we've said, a larger number of residents should direct the region's future. We hope all interested in the Grant Road project will take the opportunity to help shape our community.

See related story / B2

to learn more

- For more information on the Grant Road Improvement Plan or to get involved with it, call 624-4727 or go to www.grantroad.info.
- The Grant Road Improvement Plan Task Force meets 5:30-8 p.m. Thursday at the Tucson Association of Realtors Office, 2445 N. Tucson Blvd.
- Upcoming Neighborhood Association Community Conversations are 2-3:30 p.m. Sept. 10 and 5:30-7 p.m. Sept. 19 at the Northside Council Office (Ward 3), 1510 E. Grant Road.

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