

North Central Florida Regional Planning Council

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February 14, 2003

TO: Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization (MTPO)
FROM: Marlie Sanderson, Director of Transportation Planning
SUBJECT: **Traffic Analysis for SW 62nd Boulevard and SW 24th Avenue**

BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

The Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Board (BPAB) recommend that the MTPO:

1. keep the existing two-lane divided configuration for the SW 62nd Boulevard and SW 24th Avenue corridors as described in the adopted SW 20th Avenue Area Charrette Plan; and
2. acquire, by easement or purchase, adequate right-of-way to construct the bicycle/pedestrian trail describe in the SW 20th Avenue Area Charrette Plan.

JOINT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) recommend that the MTPO:

1. agree with the conclusion of the traffic analysis that the results indicate the adequacy of a two lane cross-section for SW 62nd Boulevard and SW 24th Avenue and that a four lane cross-section is not warranted; and
2. receive additional more detailed planning and traffic operations studies before the long range transportation plan is amended.

MTPO STAFF RECOMMENDATION

MTPO staff recommend that the MTPO keep the existing two-lane divided configuration for the SW 62nd Boulevard and SW 24th Avenue corridors as described in the adopted SW 20th Avenue Area Charrette Plan and not amend the long range transportation plan.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting on December 12, the MTPO decided to:

1. *schedule a public hearing to consider amending the long range transportation plan;*
2. *contract with Renaissance Planning Group to test alternative road networks both with and without the proposed Butler Plaza expansion that includes four-lane and two-lane alternatives for SW 62nd Boulevard and SW 24th Avenue; and*
3. *request that Alachua County Public Works Department staff develop cost estimates for the alternatives tested.*

Enclosures

Enclosed please find the following documents:

1. the January 22, 2003 Renaissance Planning Group report entitled Analysis for Potential Amendment to the 2020 Transportation Plan;
2. SW 20th Avenue/Hull Road Area- Charrette Implementation Plan;
3. Alachua County Attorney Memorandum dated February 10, 2003;
4. Alachua County Public Works Department Cost Estimates; and
5. December 16, 2002 Butler Enterprises Memorandum.

REVIEW COMMENTS CONCERNING THE RPG TRAFFIC ANALYSIS

The following material provides MTPO staff review comments concerning several issues in the Renaissance Planning Group (RPG) Traffic Analysis. These comments reflect our concern that the forecasts of the future amount of traffic congestion in the Butler Plaza area is significantly less than we expected.

One possible explanation is that the MTPO's computer model has not been validated for almost ten years (since 1994). It should also be noted that this validation was to 1990 Census information. Validation is a process that is normally used every five years to make adjustments in the computer model until it can produce traffic counts for the base year that are reasonably close to actual traffic counts for the base year taken at specific locations. The MTPO decided not to validate its computer model in 1999 because it preferred to use the time and resources, normally used to validate the model, to expand its public involvement efforts in the community visioning process.

Issues Difficult to Explain

1. Year 2020 forecast volumes on several roads, with the Butler expansion development, is less than latest existing traffic counts in 2001. One example is Archer Road from the proposed SW 24th Avenue intersection east to SW 16th Avenue. The Year 2001 traffic count for this section of roadway is 60,000 vehicles per day. The Year 2020 volume for this same section of roadway, in the RPG Traffic Analysis, is 57,000 vehicles per day.

With respect to this issue, the response from Renaissance Planning Group is-

"The traffic model is not going to keep assigning traffic to roads that it considers congested, so Archer Road with 60,000 volume today is not going to experience much growth in traffic in the future. The model is essentially maxing out that road segment at 57,000 and trips are likely being re-assigned elsewhere. Remember that the model has internal capacities for the road network that are different (and generally lower) from the capacities the MTPO uses for level of service analysis using current traffic count data."

2. There are eight Year 2020 forecast volumes on Archer Road between Interstate 75 and North/South Drive. Of these eight, six have forecast volumes of less traffic with Butler expansion development than without Butler expansion development. For example, Archer Road, from SW 35th Boulevard to SW 34th Street, has a Year 2020 daily traffic volume forecast for the base scenario of 45,500 with the Butler expansion development and 47,000 without the Butler expansion development.

With respect to this issue, the response from Renaissance Planning Group is-

“With more growth occurring in the Butler Plaza area, some trip ends are likely being satisfied in that area rather than traveling further into the University area. If you draw a cordon line around the Butler Plaza expansion area, all of the roadways show an increase in several thousand daily trips. However, for various reasons all those trips do not affect Archer Road. They are generally dispersed by the model throughout the network. Again, Archer Road is being treated by the model as congested, so it is not attracting more traffic - even with the proposed Butler expansion.”

Other Observations

If you study the traffic information contained in the RPG Traffic Analysis, there is an observation that can be made that tends to support widening SW 24th Avenue to four-lanes. When SW 24th Avenue is tested as a four-lane road east of SW 34th Street, the future daily traffic volume doubles from about 7,300 to about 17,200. This exceeds the two-lane capacity identified in the report of 16,800.

Overall, we feel this report underestimates the amount of future traffic congestion in this area. For example, the Year 2020 traffic volumes with the proposed Butler development on Archer Road between SW 23rd Terrace and S.W. 16th Avenue average 53,100 vehicles per day. However, procedures that are required for a Development of Regional Impact study would predict daily forecast traffic volumes on this section of Archer Road at about 67,000. The latest traffic count for this section of Archer Road is 60,000 vehicles per day. With respect to this issue, the response from Renaissance Planning Group is-

“These isolated quirks of the model are difficult to explain on an isolated segment by segment basis. Given that no subarea model calibration has been performed, and the socioeconomic data (aside from Butler Expansion information) have not been closely scrutinized in several years, it is really only possible to use the model to draw very broad conclusions like we have done in the report (i.e., the 2-lane street network as contained in the plan and expanded with several new connections appears to be sufficient to handle the projected growth in the study area).”

I think it is fair to report that the model is not likely producing accurate results for several individual roads because of its need for an update and revalidation. That is overdue. However, it is an unbiased tool that I think generally is adequate at reporting overall trends in the study area. The point is that, believe the results or not, they have not been primed or tweaked to form any specific conclusion. And it is using the best available information.”

Conclusion

The RPG Traffic Analysis states that the *“interconnected grid network appears to do a good job of dispersing traffic from Butler Plaza.”* This comment is directed to the overall benefits to the road network in this area from the construction of SW 62nd Boulevard and SW 24th Avenue as two-lane roadways. We agree with this conclusion.

However, our review comments and observations concerning the RPG Traffic Analysis indicate that this report does not seem to adequately identify the amount of traffic congestion that this area is expected to experience with the proposed expansion of Butler Plaza. It is our opinion that the future transportation system in this area will benefit from having four travel lanes on SW 24th Avenue if the means can be found to extend SW 24th Avenue east of SW 34th Street to connect to Archer Road. The SW 24th Avenue connection to Archer Road could also provide significant traffic congestion relief to portions of Archer Road.

Unfortunately, the University of Florida has not agreed to provide the right-of-way for a roadway that would extend SW 24th Avenue east of SW 34th Street to Archer Road. If SW 24th Avenue is four-laned to SW 34th Street and this road is not extended east of SW 34th Street to Archer Road, traffic congestion on SW 34th Street in this area is expected to increase significantly.

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