

UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS ASSOCIATION

105 Stanford, SE
Albuquerque, NM 87106



May 14, 2015

Mayor Richard J. Berry
City of Albuquerque
PO Box 1293
Albuquerque, NM 87103

RE: ALBUQUERQUE RAPID TRANSIT (ART)

Dear Mayor Berry:

We share your interest in improving the ABQ Ride system, so that it provides greater benefit to the entire city, not just the University area. We greatly appreciate that ABQ Ride officials have participated in two well-attended UHA-hosted meetings to discuss the Albuquerque Rapid Transit (ART) proposal, including most recently on May 5.

Some improvements in the ART Design Alternative 7 for Segment 4B in the University area have been made, including one dedicated ART lane, maintaining the two traffic lanes in both directions on Central, and maintaining the median, as we supported in our December 18, 2014 letter. However, some of our concerns have not been addressed, especially related to increased traffic on some north-south streets and on Silver, Lead, and Coal by eliminating four westbound left turn lanes at Vassar, Princeton, Columbia, and Harvard. Moreover, we believe that the process being used to develop the ART is fundamentally deficient, because it is not adequately analyzing and addressing significant, likely impacts along the entire corridor.

First, we are concerned that the design is being created as if how ART is configured in one area does not affect adjacent areas. If corridor-wide considerations are being examined at some level, they are not being discussed in individual neighborhood meetings in which we have participated. For UHA, the most important design element with corridor-wide impacts is the reduction of vehicle lanes from two to one, for much of Central from Broadway to San Mateo. Our expectation is that this design would significantly shift Central Avenue vehicle traffic to Silver, Lead and Coal Avenues (and if we may speak to parts of the corridor with which we are less familiar, to east-west streets north of Central, ie MLK Boulevard, Campus and Copper).

Second, we are concerned that the ART process has not adequately considered a long list of possible impacts, and indeed appears to be proceeding without regard to those likely impacts, including:

- increased traffic and speed on Silver despite its bike boulevard designation;
- increased traffic and speed on Lead and Coal despite life-threatening safety problems on those two streets that are not being addressed by the City;
- increased traffic and parking on residential blocks south of Central, despite existing neighborhood concerns;

- increased illegal vehicle noise on residential streets;
- increased air pollution on residential streets; and
- increased illegal transit of overweight trucks on residential streets;

Third, we are concerned that the ART process lacks a clear comprehensive definition of priorities for Central Avenue and lacks a cost-benefit analysis for what is not simply a rapid transit proposal, but would also fundamentally transform much of the historic part of the corridor. Obviously ART is the "driver" of this process, but does that mean that all other needs are secondary? For example,

- How are pedestrian needs addressed?
- How are the needs of local businesses addressed?
- How should Central Avenue parking be prioritized?
- Where preserving Central Avenue parking means reducing traffic lanes and diverting traffic to residential streets, how are the needs of neighborhoods being addressed?
- How can ART adequately balance all needs and priorities?

Fourth, we are concerned that the ART process as we have seen it is inadequately data driven. There have not been traffic and impact studies done of the effects. Such studies should be done and shared at public meetings before the funding proposal is submitted to the federal government. For example,

- What is the current level of service on Central at San Mateo, Carlisle, Girard, University, and Broadway?
- What is the projected level of service and what is the projected speed at those points with traffic lanes reduced from two to one in each direction?
- What is the current level of service and what are current speeds on Lead and Coal, at those same points along the corridor?
- What is the projected level of service on Lead and Coal with Central Avenue traffic reduced?
- What is the current level of service on Silver and what is the projected level of service with Central Avenue traffic reduced?
- What are current safety conditions on Silver, Lead, and Coal (accident data)?

Fifth, we are concerned that the scope and impacts of the ART proposal go beyond the scope of the transit department, so that other City Departments need to be part of the public discussion. We recommend the following:

1. Public meetings and ART information show the entire corridor and how design in one section affects another.
2. The potential impacts in point two above be fully addressed as part of the ART proposal.
3. That a comprehensive analysis of priorities, goals, objectives, and cost-benefit be part of the public discussion.
4. That the City disseminate the data in point four above.
5. That the Mayor's office, Municipal Development, Environmental Health, and other appropriate City entities also participate with ABQ Ride in the public discussion.

Sincerely,



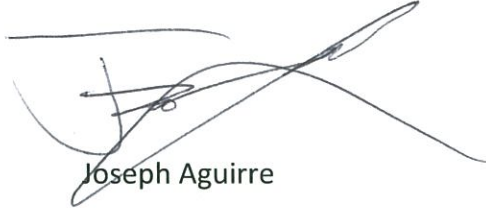
Joe Gallegos, President



Julie Kidder, Vice-President



Don Hancock, Secretary/Treasurer



Joseph Aguirre




Marlene Brown



Jennifer Simpson



Sherry Smith



Brian Stinar



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Enclosure: December 18, 2014 UHA letter

cc: Bruce Rizzieri, City Councilors, County Commissioners, UNM President Robert Frank, Rep. Gail Chasey, Sen. Cisco McSorley