

808 West Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701
May 28, 1974

Here are some observations on traffic in the 9th and 10th Street project area related in the main to the first preliminary Bovay report and other documents issued prior to the second preliminary Bovay report. This factsheet offers new basic information gathered by the Old Austin Neighborhood. Its scope is limited to present local conditions and is intended only as a response to specific statements made by various City spokesmen. A traffic study of much broader scope is presently being prepared.

The Old Austin Neighborhood feels that Bovay Engineers was commissioned to justify the City's plan for this area rather than to offer impartial consideration to the need for the plan in the first place. Further, the association feels that Bovay was not paid to argue against or to develop alternatives to the City's plan.

For this reason and to stimulate more creative, constructive thinking, various immediate and long-range possibilities have been suggested by the Old Austin Neighborhood and its members. Such suggestions were not intended as comprehensive or developed alternatives, though the organization would be willing to work with appropriate City departments to more fully explore them.

Final traffic recommendations of the Old Austin Neighborhood will depend on the completion of the organization's traffic position statement and analysis of the project's impact on the park/recreation land and the neighborhood as a whole. These findings will be submitted at the public hearing before City Council.

Yours sincerely,

Carolyn Bucknall, Chairperson
Old Austin Neighborhood

TRAFFIC VOLUME

The Old Austin Neighborhood Volunteer Count

Volunteers in the OAN have counted traffic on every block of 9th and 10th Streets between Lamar and Guadalupe. Each count was 15 minutes. This was observed to be the duration of rush time traffic and should therefore yield the highest peak traffic counts. The non-peak counts were conducted during work hours on week days. No effort was made to count periods of least traffic.

The Austin Urban Transportation Department has apparently made no such count.

Figures used in the Bovay Engineers revised preliminary report for traffic volumes in the area are not based on specific counts on 9th and 10th in the project area. ("The available cordon data is for traffic on the east edge of the Study Area. The Project Area is located about six blocks west of this cordon and adjustments to traffic volumes must be made for this location.")¹

OAN is particularly interested in presenting an actual traffic count on these two streets to the councilmen in good time for them to establish for themselves its general validity. Because the OAN volunteers used eyeballs and brains instead of mechanical counting boxes, councilmen are invited to double check their work.

Personal observation did allow the gathering of statistics on other than motor vehicles. Pedestrian and bicycle traffic was significant and has been included in the count (Table II).

One horseback rider may not have any statistical significance.

Statements in support of the 9th and 10th Street project:

"These facilities generate enough traffic to keep these streets [9th and 10th] fairly busy all during the day.

"During peak period, however, these streets are extremely congested."²

OAN reply:

"Fairly busy all during the day" does not reasonably describe non-peak traffic on these streets except in the area of the County Courthouse and the Library. "Fairly light all during the day" would be a more apt description for those parts of 9th and 10th west of San

¹Bovay Engineers, West 9th and 10th Street Improvements Study for City of Austin, May, 1974, p.31.

²"Proposed 9th and 10th Streets Traffic System," a report by Joe Ternus, dated July 16, 1973.

Antonio. This is especially true on those two blocks of 9th Street immediately east (41.33 VPH) and west (25.33 VPH) of the parkland, the area of most disruptive and objectionable impact of the City's plans.

Figures gathered by the OAN volunteers do not indicate "extremely congested" streets at peak hours. Nor was anything approaching a traffic snarl or back-up observed except on 10th by vehicles attempting to enter Lamar. Increase in traffic that would result from the City's plans would serve only to compound this situation unless the capacity of Lamar itself were increased. Again, the area around the courthouse was observed to be busiest. At 5 o'clock this area is very busy, with vehicles waiting to pick up passengers, some double parking with idling engines. There is much visiting through car windows, conversation on the sidewalk, and knots of pedestrians walking toward their parked cars and to homes in the area.

It will be noticed that peak vehicle per hour counts in this area were matched by huge increases in pedestrian counts, e.g. the section of 9th from San Antonio to Guadalupe averaged 164 vehicles per hour at 5:00-5:15, and 184 pedestrians per hour for the same time period. This reflects the use of this area as a local parking facility and not as a conduit for through traffic. Again the volume and use set forth by the 9th and 10th Streets Project would be disruptive of present conditions and usage.

TABLE I

AVERAGE VEHICLES PER HOUR ACTUAL COUNTS (No. vehicles, time and date of each)

Street	From - To	Non Peak		Peak	No. Non Peak			No. Peak		
					No.	Time	No.	Time	No.	Time
9th	Lamar - Henderson		25.33	28.00	7	(3:10-3:25 April 30)	6	(5:00-5:15 May 6)		
					8	(12:40-12:55 May 3)	8	(4:53-5:08 May 8)		
					4	(4:10-4:25 May 6)				
	Henderson - West Avenue									
	West Avenue - Rio Grande		41.33	48.00	8	(3:30-3:45 April 29)	12	(7:55-8:10 May 6)		
					12	(11:10-11:25 May 3)	12	(7:58-8:13 May 7)		
					11	(11:15-11:30 May 6)				
	Rio Grande - Nueces		76.00	120.00	24	(4:10-4:25 April 29)	24	(5:00-5:15 May 3)		
					13	(11:10-11:25 May 3)	26	(7:55-8:10 May 6)		
					20	(11:15-11:30 May 6)				
	Nueces - San Antonio		70.66	136.00	10	(10:00-10:15 May 3)	38	(5:00-5:15 April 30)		
					25	(2:00-2:15 May 3)	30	(5:00-5:15 May 6)		
					18	(11:32-11:47 May 6)				
	San Antonio - Guadalupe		148.00	164.00	38	(9:45-10:00 May 3)	46	(5:00-5:15 April 30)		
					41	(2:00-2:15 May 3)	36	(5:00-5:15 May 6)		
					32	(11:32-11:47 May 6)				
	Total Average V.P.H., Lamar - Guadalupe		80.26	99.20						

TABLE I --continued

Street	From - To	AVERAGE VEHICLES PER HOUR		ACTUAL COUNTS (No. vehicles, time and date)			
		Non Peak	Peak	No. Non Peak	No.	Peak	
10th	Lamar - West Avenue	172.00	246.00	36 (2:53-3:03 April 30)	87	(5:00-5:15 May 2)	
				51 (2:05-2:20 May 2)		36	(7:58-8:13 May 7)
				42 (10:50-11:05 May 3)			
	West Avenue - Rio Grande	130.66	114.00	28 (10:50-11:05 May 3)	31	(7:55-8:10 May 6)	
				44 (2:50-3:05 May 3)		26	(7:58-8:13 May 7)
				26 (2:55-3:10 May 6)			
	Rio Grande - Nueces	141.33	184.00	32 (10:30-10:45 May 3)	64	(5:00-5:15 May 3)	
				44 (2:50-3:05 May 3)		33	(7:55-8:10 May 6)
				30 (2:55-3:10 May 6)			
	Nueces - San Antonio	146.66	306.00	28 (10:30-10:45 May 3)	84	(5:00-5:15 May 3)	
				40 (2:25-2:40 May 3)		69	(4:55-5:10 May 7)
				42 (3:13-3:28 May 6)			
	San Antonio - Guadalupe	257.33	342.00	70 (10:05-10:20 May 3)	91	(5:00-5:15 May 3)	
				67 (2:25-2:40 May 3)		80	(4:55-5:10 May 7)
				56 (3:13-3:28 May 6)			
	Total Average V.P.H., Lamar - Guadalupe	169.59	240.40				
9th and 10th Com- bined	Total Average V.P.H., Lamar - Guadalupe	114.90	161.50				

TABLE II: PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE TRAFFIC

St.	From - To	PEDESTRIANS				BICYCLES	
		Average Per Hour		Actual Counts*		Actual Counts*	
		Non Peak	Peak	Non peak	Peak	Non peak	Peak
0th	Lamar - Henderson	6.66	0.00	1,0,4	0	0,0,0	2,2
	Henderson - West Avenue	---	---	---	---	---	---
	West Avenue - Rio Grande	5.33	2.00	2,1,1	1,0	0,1,0	0,0
	Rio Grande - Nueces	10.66	8.00	5,3,0	2	1,2,0	0,0
	Nueces - San Antonio	14.00	no count	6,1	no count	2,2,1	0
	San Antonio - Guadalupe	57.33	184.00	35,13,5	46	3,1	0
0th	Lamar - West Avenue	20.00	14.00	2,9,4	3,4	1,2,2	1,0
	West Avenue - Rio Grande	8.00	14.00	3,1	4,3	0,2,0	1,1
	Rio Grande - Nueces	12.00	24.00	6,2,1	6	0,1,0	1,0
	Nueces - San Antonio	46.66	68.00	11,6,18	17	1,0,6	1,1
	San Antonio - Guadalupe	168.00	184.00	48,40,38	46	1,0,5	0,1

*Observed during same 15-minute intervals noted in Table I. A few observers did not report pedestrians and bicycles.

NEED ENGENDERED BY COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Old Austin Neighborhood replies (below) are based on conversations with Commissioners Voudouris and Moya (present and former commissioners of the downtown precinct respectively) and with Bill Rust, County Auditor. No one interviewed was aware of the plans to make 9th and 10th Streets a paired one-way system; to their knowledge the County had not been consulted on this matter in any way. None had requested City action in the matter or had ever heard of such a request.

Mr. Marcus Youngblood, architect for the new garage, was also interviewed to determine whether he was aware that the proposal had been made to change 10th to a one-way street running westward. Since there are two entrance/exits on 10th, such knowledge might well have affected design. Mr. Youngblood had not been apprised of this possibility.

Statements in support of the 9th and 10th Street projects:

"Parking around the courthouse will be even more limited, and will create substantial problems until the county parking garage is finished."³

OAN reply:

The County garage is planned in two phases. The first, to consist of four and a half storeys, is due for completion on September 1, 1974. The second phase, still in the indefinite future, will bring the height of the garage to seven storeys. It is true that parking is even more limited while construction is under way (the garage site is the former employee's parking lot); however, it is also apparent that street alterations would occur too late to affect the construction period.

Statements in support of the 9th and 10th Street projects:

"In view of the fact that these two streets could provide sorely needed relief to traffic congestion to new County office and the central business district, I believe it is essential."⁴

"... Completion of the system will improve local circulation around the courthouse complex."³

"... and improve access to the courthouse complex ..."³

³"Proposed 9th and 10th Streets Traffic System," a report by Joe Ternus, dated July 16, 1973.

⁴Memorandum on "Additional Project for the Capital Improvements Program," submitted to the Council by Dan Davidson on July 19, 1973.

OAN reply:

Once phase one is completed 200 new parking spaces will be provided, 150 for the public and 50 for county employees. In addition, employees will be picking up an additional 20 parking spaces under the new office annex, completion on which is imminent. The intention of the garage construction is to remove a large number of vehicles from the street and thereby relieve congestion in the area. To introduce additional new traffic onto 10th Street is to reopen the possibility of congestion that the County thought it had solved.

Statements in support of the 9th and 10th Street project:

"With the county expansion, proposed parking garages, and general development of the area, the traffic circulation and access to this area must be improved ..."⁵

"Yes, this is brought about somewhat by the expansion of the County complex, County offices, parking garages, traffic ..."⁶

OAN reply:

No one interviewed had knowledge of any imminent expansion of county staff. Again, the opening of the County annex was intended to give sorely needed space to the present staff, not to provide additional space for additional staff. Mr. Rust indicated that the County likely would add two to two and a half new positions to the custodial staff as a result of occupancy of the new building, but that this was the only increase anticipated.

Summation

The 9th and 10th Street project proposals were not developed in co-ordination with County officials. While County officials were attempting one solution to the problem of congestion, City planners were contemplating another that might effectively be in opposition to it. Provision for an expanded County staff is not an immediate objective.

⁵"Proposed 9th and 10th Streets Traffic System," a report by Joe Ternus, dated July 16, 1973.

⁶Mayor Roy Butler in Council meeting, July 19, 1973.

IN CONCLUSION

To cite present conditions on 9th and 10th as a problem which requires the creation of a one-way pair similar in size and volume to present 5th and 6th (first Bovay report, p.10) is back to front--putting the cart before the horse--or in this case the huge street capacity before the huge traffic volume. Huge traffic volume is demonstrably not presently on these streets. The traffic volume and congestion are not going to be increased by immediate courthouse plans, but alleviated by them.

Statements attesting to the present large volume, extreme congestion, and aggravation of these conditions by the County have been central to the initiation of the 9th-10th extension and one-way proposals. OAN has never been convinced by these statements and has researched the situation. We believe that evidence here presented persuasively supports our opinion.

It should be pointed out that these arguments, though they initiated the proposal, though they were the impetus for the first Bovay report, have been abandoned by the second (revised) Bovay report of May 1974.

A much more complicated twenty-year, county-wide expansion argument replaces the congestion-courthouse expansion argument. OAN questions this substitution of justifications.

There should be a fixed and stable justification for such a project and a consideration of variable and fluctuating alternative solutions. There should not be a fixed and stable solution and variable and fluctuating justifications, as we have here.