



1st Street/Ash Avenue/Rio Salado Parkway Intersection Design Concepts Public Input Summary

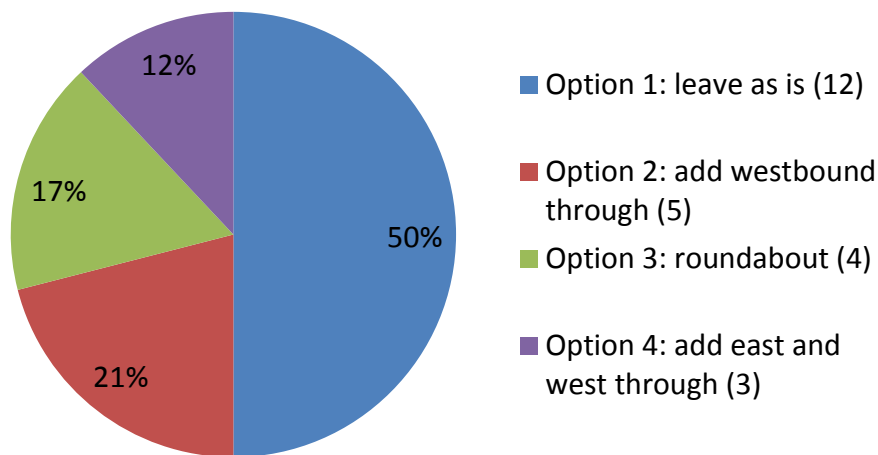


Overview

A public meeting was held on April 17, 2017 to get feedback on proposed design concepts for the intersection. Eight people attended the meeting. Surveys were available at the meeting and online from April 14 through April 28, 2017. Twenty-four responses were received, 6 at the meeting and 18 online. In addition, staff received 2 email comments from property owners that also filled out the survey.

Survey Responses

1. Of the four options shown for the treatment of the intersection of 1st Street, Ash Avenue and Rio Salado Parkway, which do you prefer?



Total responses: 24

2. Why did you choose this option?

Option 1

1. I am a Planner and Landscape Architect that works at 120 Ash and I am directly impacted by this interchange. The existing configuration allows for the safest flow of vehicular traffic to my office. There is also a significant amount of pedestrian traffic at this intersection area due to the offices, restaurants, and the park in the area. The existing configuration is by far the best and safest configuration for pedestrians.
2. I work at 120 S. Ash Avenue (LVA).....all other options would not work well.
3. The City of Tempe "cannot" move east/west traffic west of Ash on 1st Street - there is a UP rail line, light rail line and an intersection at 1st St/Farmer comes to a T!
4. Safest, simplest and least confusing option presented.
5. I work at 120 S. Ash Avenue. I think the current lack of connectivity keeps the traffic on Rio Salado and out of the neighborhood.

6. Option 4 takes up too much land and doesn't make sense. It also cuts into the pedestrian walkways and adds a lot of unnecessary medians. Option 3 roundabout doesn't seem good because people who aren't familiar with Tempe will not be able to figure out the multiple lanes of roundabout. Also, the streetcar looks like it's cutting right through the median instead of circling it and then cutting across multiple lanes of traffic. That's a mess. Option 2, like option 3, takes up land that could be used for development, it's expensive, and it doesn't seem like there's enough traffic to make this construction worth it. Also, the signals seem confusing and aren't indicated well on the map. Leaving the intersection as is seems the most viable. You don't get the westbound access, but it's the simplest to understand from a driver's perspective and it's clear how the streetcar will fit into traffic.
7. As a resident of the Farmer Arts District and employee of LVA, I spend almost all of my time in and around this area. I realize the intersection is currently unusual, but it does work. The three build options all seem problematic in one way or another. I see no reason to change it when there isn't a better solution.
8. It makes the most sense of the available options.
9. I work at 120 S. Ash, LVA
10. Less disruptive. While all options seem feasible, the existing conditions seems to provide the best traffic control
11. I own the property at the northwest corner of this intersection, which is impacted by a couple of these options. I selected Option 1 as I have not heard of any reason why this change should be considered, other than rumors that our city council made commitments to the restaurants on Farmer Ave. that the city would increase access to their businesses. Staff has told us that they know of NO safety issues or accident history that is driving this study. I selected option 1 as this is the most stewardly option given the cost studies that were done the last time the city considered this, and, because all of the other options impact my property and my existing access.

Option 2

1. Do nothing option does not solve current access issues w/ 1st St, Option 3 and 4 looked like conflicts with pedestrians, bikes, streetcar and confused drivers. Option 2 seemed the most straightforward, easy to follow and least accident prone, while providing the most access and greatest flow of traffic.
2. Existing junction is a disaster. I don't like roundabouts (too confusing). #2 seems simpler than #4. An east/west through is desirable; I have never liked roundabouts.
3. Work at LVA
4. Least car centric. Like pedestrian island buffer. Additional crosswalk. Stops for bus and streetcar. Minimizes bottleneck traffic. Rio westbound traffic right turn on 1st St. turn no left to southbound Ash on u-turn except streetcar.

Option 3

1. Will slow traffic down. Easier and safer access to Riverside neighborhood from Rio Salado (east) west bound get to avoid Mill Ave. More opportunity for art, banner for entering neighborhood.
2. Although it requires more r/w and construction costs than the other options, the design will stand the test of time as far as efficient movement of all modes of traffic (bike, pedestrian, train, cars) is concerned.
3. With the development along 1st St. currently under way, the volume of traffic will increase 10X++ and a roundabout is likely the best option to handle the heavy volume coming from Rio Salado during peak hours and future heavy volume from 1st St. More traffic lights will just create traffic jams, hassle and air pollution from idling cars and deter travel into Tempe from neighboring areas. I work in downtown Tempe near Rio Salado and owned a business on Mill for many many years. Now have business interests on Mill and Rio Salado travel north to 5th St. and then double back south thorough the neighborhoods to get home. The traffic signals are

cumbersome now and any more will not be welcomed. You stated you would be working with the streetcar project to incorporate this but none of this was shown on your diagrams and it will have a big impact worth considering. The improvements to this intersection will create better access to Mill and reduce congestion. However if you overlay streetcar tracks and create more congestion and traffic hassles or delays for people driving you have defeated your purpose. People prefer to drive and that will likely not change. With the implementation of new public transportation technologies like Uber with their "ride on demand" and their competition, all arriving within in minutes for customer service, no waiting for public transportation, no schedule, robotic cars (going mainstream soon) and electric cars (Ford is building a huge plant in MI at this time). A fixed track system with a timetable schedule is obsolete technology and will go by the wayside sooner than later. This is 1890's technology and the reality check is that it is obsolete at this time for an "around town" travel option. Therefore, Please include flexibility in your plan regarding the streetcar tracks that when they are no longer needed we, the tax payers, are not stuck with a massive expense to remove the track system from this intersection. Be smart about it!! There is a very high probability the streetcar will not be able to compete long term with the private sector and the new travel options coming to market, and will sooner than expected.... cease to operate.

Option 4

1. #4 improvement with least cost; crosswalk on north side of intersection. Important to consider safety for bikes and pedestrians. #3 roundabout is unsafe for pedestrians and bikes, people don't really understand roundabouts so potential for gridlock with trains on 1st.
2. I work in DT Tempe, and occasionally take walks along this route during lunch. Option 4 appears to provide the best pedestrian experience.
3. Low impact to surrounding properties. Cheapest option of #2, 3 and 4. Concerned that drivers won't be able to navigate the roundabout (#3).

3. Additional comments

1. Due to the amount of pedestrian traffic at this intersection area you have to eliminate the roundabout in option 3. Roundabouts are great for moving vehicles around but are dangerous for pedestrians. The point of a round-about is for the free flow of vehicles, and pedestrians interrupt that making them less effective. Additionally, the traffic lights at Mill and 3rd Street create a condition called platooning which dumps a bunch of cars all at the same time at this intersection making the roundabout less effective as well. Options 2 and 4 are also not as safe as option 1 for pedestrians as both of these proposed options add an additional lane of traffic to cross with multiple islands adding additional distance to cover in the short time allotted to cross the street. Option 4 restricts access to 120 Ash, or at the very least confuses people on how to access the site. This configuration also creates more opportunities for a vehicle to drive down the wrong side of the road. The diagram even shows "striping" of the lanes/travel paths going to the wrong side of the street. The left turn lane for west bound Rio Salado is drawn going into the east bound 1st Street lane. If a traffic engineer can get confused by this then the lay person most likely will.
2. 2nd choice is #2. Safer access to Riverside neighborhood from westbound then existing.

3. I live in the Regatta Pointe complex that is between 1st St and Rio Salado. Residents have always wanted to go straight thru from Rio Salado to 1st Street. There is a second advantage that may not be obvious: Every car that uses the realigned junction from Rio Salado to 1st St, is one less car that goes thru the tight 90 degree turn underneath the Railroad bridge. That tight turn causes crashes on a weekly basis and results in excessive noise from drivers accelerating wildly out of the slow corner. It is likely that the reduction in crashes under the RR bridge will more than offset any increase in crashes from the Ash/Rio realignment. When a freight train is crossing, there is limited space east of the track for a line of cars to wait behind the RR barrier. I can suggest a variation of option 2 or 4 that would give twice as much space for cars to back up behind the RR barrier while giving two other advantages: If the section of Rio Salado Pkwy going north from the Ash/Rio junction is realigned eastwards, to be up against and parallel with the old disused bridge abutment, we get the following: 1) The realigned Ash/Rio junction would be further away from the RR track, giving more backing up room behind the RR tracks. 2) In addition, it would create a fully right angle junction, giving the streetcar an easier, shorter turn. 3) It would allow for the opening up of the tight curve under the RR bridge to a much smoother and safer curve that can be taken at a higher speed. My proposed wider curve would occupy the north end of the existing parking lot (east of RR bridge) and could also have a camber to further smooth's the curve. That is a significant enlargement to your project, but am bringing it up since there is a close connection to your existing project. It would involve land purchase, but would create an equal area of land where the road currently exists. In effect, my hypothetical road alignment would switch places with the existing parking lot. The ugly/unused building would be demolished. Finally, it is hard for drivers to see cyclists and skateboarders, who often break all the rules while whizzing thru the Ash/Rio junction. They often have no reflectors/lights and wear dark clothing. Can improved street lighting be incorporated into the junction redesign? As a pedestrian, I was almost hit by a car that only saw me at the last moment.
4. I've worked at LVA for over four years, and I've lived in the Farmer Arts District almost as long. I'm all for improvements in this area, but only if they make sense and don't cause new problems. I'd rather stick with what is currently there, since I don't think it isn't working.
5. I work for LVA at 120 S. Ash Avenue, Suite 201 Tempe, AZ 85281
6. I work at 120 S Ash Ave, LVA urban design studio.
7. If the city decides to move forward with other options, I respectfully request that you only consider option 3 and ONLY if you can shift it north and east so that it does not impact my fee property and does not take any access away from the existing full access. Macayos blocks off my access from the south several times a week and our only other access is this intersection. The previous study by KHA recommended Option 3, but the project was shelved due to lack of funding. We will oppose option 4 as it takes our access to the intersection away by restricting our access to and from Rio Salado and Ash Ave.

Emails

April 10, 2017 - I read with enthusiasm the flyer about the Rio Salado / 1st Street junction re-alignment and find all of the options to be better than the status quo. I live in the Regatta Pointe complex that is between 1st St and Rio Salado. Being able to go straight thru from Rio Salado to 1st Street is something Regatta residents have always wanted. There is a second advantage that may not be obvious: Every car that uses the realigned junction from Rio Salado to 1st St, is one less car that goes thru the tight 90 degree turn underneath the railroad bridge. That tight turn causes crashes on a weekly basis and results in excessive noise from drivers accelerating wildly out of the slow corner. It is likely that the reduction in crashes under the RR bridge will more than offset any increase in crashes from Options 1 and 2. I see one snag with the re-alignment: when a freight train is crossing, there may not be enough space east of the track for a line of cars to wait. I can suggest a variation of option 2 would give twice as much space for cars to back up behind the RR barrier while giving two other advantages: If the section of Rio Salado Pkwy going north towards town lake is realigned eastwards to be up against and parallel with the disused bridge abutment, then the realigned junction would be further away from the RR track, giving more backing up room behind the RR tracks. In addition, it would create a fully right angle junction, giving the streetcar an easier, shorter turn AND would allow for the re-alignment of the tight curve under the RR bridge to a much more open, smoother and safer curve. I guess that would be a significant enlargement to your project, but am bringing it up since there is a close connection to your existing project. That's my two cents,

May 2, 2017 - Please see the attached questions and comments that I have related to the 4 alternatives you posted for public input. I would be happy to meet with you before the Transportation Commission hearing if you would like to discuss before then. Is the Transportation Hearing for public input and a recommendation or just a study session? Please confirm the City Council date for this item when it is set.