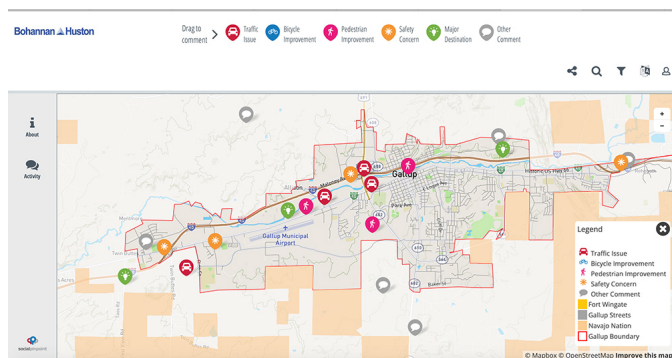


Mapping the future

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
Friday, 17 March 2023 04:05



City seeks citizen input on getting around town

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Gallup, meet your transportation future. In fact, how about helping to plan it?

Gallupians will get their first chance to comment toward the city's Transportation Master Plan when representatives of city consultant Bohannon Huston host a public meeting to introduce it March 13 at 4:30 pm at the El Morro Events Center, 210 S. Second St.

This first meeting is to explain what the TMP is, why it's important to the city's future and how citizens can raise concerns early.

In short, consultants are putting together a document that aims to have every major mode of transportation in and around the city working together. It is intended for planners to use when making decisions about growth management and how to allocate scarce resources.

"It's meant to address traffic circulation throughout the city, things like traffic congestion, safety issues and potential opportunities for improvements," Derrick Webb, senior planner with Bohannon Huston, said.

The idea is to create a more efficient transportation network that makes it easier for people to get where they need to go.

"We are really looking to the public to understand their lived experience with the transportation network in the city," Webb explained. "We need to understand where the pain points are, where opportunities lie, what types of improvements the community is really looking for."

Webb wants residents to know this is not a road maintenance hotline. Suggestions will be used to create a big picture of community needs and possible responses to consider as other projects come up.

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“It’s kind of like a menu of options,” Webb said. “Understanding that people feel like adding capacity someplace is helpful, but [the plan] won’t dictate lane or walk widths or anything specific.”

For those who want to work ahead, the consultants have set up a website that explains the timeline and has links to other relevant local studies. It also has an interactive project map that citizens can use to literally pinpoint traffic problems right down to the block or intersection on any street in the project area.

“We’re looking for input from the entire city, not from any one specific area. That’s why we have the callouts for ‘what areas do you think need work?’” Planning and Development Director C.B. Strain said.

Comments sought fall into a few general categories: safety concerns, traffic issues, pedestrian improvements, bicycle improvements and other comments. Residents can click a button to choose a category, set a map pin and add a comment. They can also like others’ comments.

No concern is too small: residents are invited to comment on things like where sidewalks have no disabled access, or there are no sidewalks at all; speeding problems; poor lighting; or where a bus stop or parking is needed. Comments can also relate to accessing trains and airplanes.

Examples of citizen comments so far include “Much needed pedestrian improvements” downtown, “Extend Bengal Boulevard to Twin Buttes Road and further east to Crest View Road” and “Need a bus stop near the detox and recovery center for community accessibility.”

A group of stakeholders – mainly local government and community leaders – are also working on the plan and have commented on the need for pedestrian and bike paths along Historic Highway 66 and a suggestion to “connect Mentmore to Mendoza to support a southern loop connection.”

The main thing is for residents to “think about where they go on a given day, what trips they make,” Webb said, and make notes about traffic congestion and safety issues. Since part of the

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goal is to help identify alternative modes that people would take if they were convenient, comments about where sidewalk or bicycle facilities would get people out of cars are “super helpful.”

The consultants encourage making comments as soon as possible, but the map will be available through the summer while they are creating the plan. They will present it at another public meeting and to the city council in the fall.

The TMP is separate from the state’s Route 66 Improved initiative, which is focused on Historic Highway 66 and just finished a similar public comment period. The TMP addresses roads under city control, and will factor in plans for Highway 66 and other connection points such as county roads.

Bohannon Huston will host the community meeting at 4:30 pm March 13 at the El Morro Events Center, 210 S. Second St. Those unable to attend in person may join via Zoom meeting with the meeting ID: 838 0612 7977 and passcode: 527526.

The project website is at <https://bhi.mysocialpinpoint.com/gallup-transportation-master-plan> and the interactive project map is available at https://bhi.mysocialpinpoint.com/gallup-transportation-master-plan/gallup-master-transportation-plan_interactivemap#/

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