Clay Ave. Alignments - Current & Potential

Potential Clay Ave. Extension

Clay Avenue Extension: Why? Why not?
Clay Avenue is the fourth and minor leg of the busiest intersection in the City. It is also a key entry or gateway to the La Plaza Vieja neighborhood. An efficient regional transportation is a primary policy objective of the Regional Plan, and so is protecting existing neighborhoods. (This is illustrated by the fact that traffic flow or congestion is the top complaint in the annual Community Values survey. At the same time, cut-through traffic is a frequent complaint from neighborhoods across the city.)

Why extend Clay Avenue? It removes traffic, including traffic from La Plaza Vieja, from the Milton Road and W. Route 66 arterials helping them to operate better.

Why not? It protects the neighborhood character by keeping traffic volumes, including cut through traffic, from growing faster than they might otherwise.

Current Cross Section

Nowhere in the Regional Plan or other City codes and policies is the “right” balance clearly stated. Planning studies and public outreach processes help us test possibilities, inform and learn from the public, and reach decisions. The Neighborhood Plan will provide very important input into this complex decision making process.

The map at the top shows Clay Avenue divided into 4 segments. Segment 1 is a possible future route and Segments 2 - 4 are closeups of the existing road. The road is currently in a 50’ right-of-way (ROW), shown in light blue. The yellow and green lines show a 55’ and 62’ ROW, respectively. On the poster titled “What are the benefits of pedestrian friendly streets?” these widths show potential impacts of changes within the ROW. The maps for Segments 2 - 4 also show possible pinch points between buildings on either side of Clay Avenue.
What are the benefits of pedestrian friendly streets?

**Typical Elements of Pedestrian-Friendly Streets**

1. Streets that are interconnected and have small block patterns
2. Traffic calming devices to slow traffic, or reduced speed limits
3. Median islands to provide a refuge area for crossing pedestrians
4. Public spaces and pedestrian "pockets" adjacent to the main pedestrian travel way, that provide a place to rest and interact (sidewalk cafes, benches, etc.)
5. Awnings/covered entrances that shelter pedestrians from weather
6. Planting buffers, with landscaping and street trees that provide shelter and shade without obstructing sight distances and help to soften the surrounding buildings and hard surfaces
7. Street lighting designed to pedestrian scale
8. Wide, continuous sidewalks or fully accessible separated walkways
9. On street parking as a barrier between pedestrians and traffic

Some Tradeoffs to Consider...

* A 62' ROW would be most feasible in Segment 3 (between Malpais & Blackbird Roost)
* Room for a parking lane or a median, but probably not both
* Bus shelters could be placed close to the street or behind the sidewalks, depending on the location in the neighborhood
* Residences would have smaller front yards and commercial buildings would be closer to the street
* Sidewalks could be wide enough for street furniture like benches and trashcans, or possibly sidewalk cafes
* With medians, residents would be limited to right turns only out of driveways, and U-turns if necessary.

...tradeoffs with a smaller road (55' ROW)

* A 55' ROW can be achieved with less landscaping, narrower sidewalks, or on-street parking lanes
* Forego a median in favor of maximized pedestrian improvements on the edge.

How can I define and protect my private property?

To offset increased pedestrian and auto activity in front of homes, the City could build short landscape walls or fences along property lines. These small structures would better define the boundary between private yards and public spaces and add visual interest along the Clay Avenue. Construction materials could be historically relevant to the neighborhood, such as lumber, rail road ties, etc.
How might transit improvements be provided on Clay Ave?

Could there be bus service in the neighborhood?

In the past, Clay Ave and Blackbird Roost were frequently used for area bus routes because the transfer station was located on Malpais. Complaints about the frequency and noise caused by bus traffic, and the relocation of the transfer station to Southside resulted in buses being routed along Milton and W Route 66. Currently there are 3 bus routes that use S. Milton Road between Butler/Clay Ave and W Route 66, with frequencies between 20 and 60 minutes. It may be possible to move one of these lines to Clay Ave to provide better transit access for the Montessori charter school, ballpark and neighborhood residents. This would also provide a better car-alternative to NAU students, who are tenants in the neighborhood but have classes on central and south campus.

NAIPTA Bus Shelters

Transit improvements along Clay Ave. could include shelters and bus pullouts. Shelters can be located close to the curb and street or setback behind the sidewalk depending on the site and landscaping. Bus pullouts can be shared space with travel lanes, dedicated right turn lanes and bike lanes, if there is an additional shoulder space. A bus pullout could also be located, where there is currently on street parking. The relocation of a bus route and associated improvements is not dependent on the Clay Ave Extension.

A Dedicated Bus Route in La Plaza Vieja?

The City, Flagstaff Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the Northern Arizona Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority are considering a unique option for any potential extension of Clay Ave: a dedicated bus/bike/pedestrian way. A classic dedicated bus route or busway is a road used solely for transit vehicles. It improves the efficiency of the route because it reduces traffic delays and can allow for higher frequency service without additional buses as a result. Because frequency for routes in Flagstaff is generally low, they could also be used to accommodate bicycle traffic and wider sidewalks to encourage pedestrian use along the busway. A busway would not allow cars, vans and trucks, including those of neighborhood residents, to make the connection from Clay Ave to Kaibab Lane and would therefore have a minimal impact on traffic volumes. Before taking this concept too far, the partners need to evaluate how a busway and change in access to transit would affect trips generated along and towards W Route 66. Building a busway might not necessarily preclude a future road that allows all traffic. Busways can also accommodate emergency vehicles.