

MEMORANDUM



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TO: Lauren Simcic, AICP
City of New Braunfels
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CC: Garry Ford, PE
Edmund Haas, AICP

FROM: Ellen Emeric

SUBJECT: Seminole Drive Extension

DATE: 3/16/2023

PROJECT: Espinoza Property Development Review; Review of Thoroughfare Plan Amendment Request

Freese and Nichols, Inc. ("FNI") has reviewed the request submitted to the City of New Braunfels ("the City") in February 2023 by Ink Civil ("Applicant") to remove the proposed extension of Seminole Drive east of FM 1101 from the adopted 2012 Regional Thoroughfare Plan (RTP) to accommodate proposed development of Espinoza Property along 1400/1500 FM 1101. In response to this request, we offer the following comments.

Accommodating Growth

In 2021, FNI initiated a comprehensive thoroughfare plan analysis of the southeast sector of the city. This analysis assessed projected growth and the thoroughfare plan's compatibility with projected growth. The analysis made use of the AAMPO regional travel demand model (TDM), the adopted regional thoroughfare plan, local and regional GIS data, and several other qualitative and quantitative sources. Following this analysis and subsequent planning efforts undertaken since by the City, it is reasonable to conclude that removal of the Seminole Drive link from the RTP is generally inconsistent with the City's goals.

- A major finding of this effort focused on the city's limited capacity to accommodate daily travel demands as growth trends continue. According to demographic forecast data obtained from the Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's (AAMPO) TDM in 2021, the number of households in the TAZ where the subject property is located is expected to increase by 250%. Many new, parallel facilities will be needed, and corridor preservation should be prioritized as already rapid growth accelerates. SH 46 alone is not able to accommodate all East-West travel through the area.
- The 2021 Southeast Sector thoroughfare plan analysis recommended the preservation of not only existing future connections, but also additional ROW to further support continued growth and development. This points to the need to maintain the connection that would be provided more promptly by the construction of Seminole Drive.

Many natural barriers in the city (natural environmental features, built environment, continued residential development) are further narrowing the options for alternative connections in this sector of the city. This makes preservation of the Seminole alignment paramount to meeting the goals of the Thoroughfare Plan and the Comprehensive Plan. Preserving ROW for future alternative connections is also consistent with the City's ongoing efforts to analyze and responsibly prepare for future growth.

Connectivity and Network Redundancy

The existing New Braunfels transportation network currently does not provide sufficient redundancy in this area. There is a lack of alternative east-west connections between FM 1101 and Alves Lane north of SH 46 and south of Barbarosa Road, a nearly two-mile stretch. The extension of Seminole Drive is clearly shown not only on the City's RTP, but on the Roadway Impact Fee Capital Improvement Plan (IFCIP) map.

- SH 46 consistently experiences more congestion during peak hours than most other links within the city, furthering the need for supplemental routes to accommodate local area circulation. This impact is compounded by the ongoing construction near SH46 and IH 35.
- The only available connection in this focus area is via local roads through the August Fields neighborhood just south of Freiheit Elementary School. With no other link in the area, it will likely attract internal neighborhood traffic trying to avoid SH 46 and potentially higher-intensity, regional traffic trying to circumvent area traffic congestion. As such, there is a need for supporting linkages such as Seminole Drive to support neighborhood circulation, particularly to/from area schools.
- Maintaining the Seminole Drive link is more consistent with livable communities, better Emergency/EMS response and access, etc.

Available Alternatives

Brooks Avenue provides a favorable potential alternative to Seminole Drive as an east-west connection. However, plans for the North-South arterial that would connect FM 1101 to the IH 35 Frontage Roads/Elliot Knox Boulevard are not finalized, nor is an understanding of development that will occur on the property north of the subject tract and thereby substantiate the linkage provided by Brooks. These two elements are critical to understanding the long-term effects of Seminole's removal from the RTP, and the need for an alternative connection is immediate for aforementioned reasons.

To preserve the goals of the City of New Braunfels RTP, maintain safe community access to the nearby schools and commercial locations, create opportunities for more efficient fire and EMS routes, and provide neighborhood connectivity and alternative safe routes to schools for area students, Seminole Drive extension should be maintained on the RTP and implemented through the development process. Based on our understanding of the City's planning and engineering related priorities, it is our recommendation that the City defer the acceptance of the Applicant's realignment until other relevant planning initiatives are finalized for acceptance/approval by the City.

Please contact us with any questions or clarifications related to this review.

[End of memo]