

Neighbors United Against the Widening of Alma Drive

On April 28 of last year, your Allen City Council voted on an Inter-local agreement with Collin County to convert Alma Drive to a 6-lane thoroughfare from the Sam Rayburn Tollway (Hwy. 121) to Hedgcoxe Road, which will:

- Compromise the safety for drivers, pedestrians and school children along Alma Drive**
- Ignore the Right-of-Way requirements specified in the “Allen Land Development Code”**
- Destroy more than 80 beautifully mature trees lining the median of Alma Drive**
- Reduce property values of homes within a multi-block radius of Alma Drive** (homes backing up to Alma will directly affect interior home values)
- Waste \$2.75 million in Allen taxpayer dollars on a currently unjustifiable project due to a Collin County agenda and \$2.75 million matching “gift”** (\$5.5 million total projected cost)

You may be wondering, “Why didn’t we know this vote was took place?” The reason is quite simple. The city’s plans were not openly aired. When the vote took place, it was conveniently grouped with several other proposals in one block vote with no open discussion or feedback allowed from Allen residents. While the city has no legal obligation to communicate anything about road widenings, the timing of these decisions and the lack of effort to effectively brief or solicit feedback from the community paved the way for a quick “rubber stamping.”

So where are we going now? Many West Allen neighbors have collectively joined together over this past year to oppose the city’s plans to widen Alma. While there is no shortage of legitimate and, for some, very personal reasons for opposing this project, our Neighbors United group has determined the highest potential for success in fighting the widening will be to focus on **Four Key Concerns** that can be supported with quantifiable data:

1. **Data Does Not Support the “Need” for 6 Lanes**

- The most recent traffic study (2011-2013) only encompassed Alma from Exchange to Granger (< ¼ mile). It showed a daily traffic count of 16,343 vehicles per day. Today’s 4-lane road will accommodate 26,800 vehicles per day. A 6-lane road will accommodate **40,200 vehicles per day**.
- Fair projections cannot be made until: 1) a new traffic study is completed after the Hwy. 75 expansion is complete and schools are in session, and 2) Plans are approved for the development of the 121/Alma area. Different types of development will generate different volumes and patterns of traffic, so projections should be done based on real plans, not imagined ones. As of yet, no proposals for development have come before the Council.

2. **Right-of-Way Shortage**

- The City’s own “Allen Land Development Code” calls for a minimum right-of-way (ROW) of 120’ to 140’ for a six-lane “M6D Arterial” thoroughfare. While the average ROW in Allen for a six-lane thoroughfare is 135’ to 150’, Alma Drive offers **just 108’** along the Beacon Hill and Twin Creeks/Raintree Estates sections, and 125’ between Phase 2 & 3 of Watters Crossing.

3. **Safety Hazards**

- Converting a four-lane, residential drive to a six-lane commuter thoroughfare for McKinney and Plano residents compromises the safety of many Allen pedestrians who use this drive every day, forcing children, joggers and other pedestrians to use sidewalks already **less than 3’** from the road
- Opening an “M6D Arterial” six-lane thoroughfare would give a new, faster option for county commuters for a road that currently does not require even half of the 40,200 vehicles per day 6 lanes would support.

- Wider thoroughways will bring higher traffic speeds.
- Children will be forced to cross 6 lanes of traffic at the Bel Air/Alma Drive intersection to attend Norton Elementary and Ereckson Middle School, use HOA facilities, and visit friends.
- Young high school commuters departing Twin Creeks (Granger Drive) and Beacon Hill (Constellation Drive) will be forced to make dangerous, unprotected left (northbound) turns to go east on Exchange*
- Green Elementary School parents departing Beacon Hill at Constellation will be forced to make a dangerous unprotected left (northbound) turn to reach Comanche Drive*
 - * Note: the City Engineer has already gone on record saying that additional lights at Constellation and Granger Drives are "highly unlikely" due to the close proximities to existing lights.

4. Fiscal Responsibility

- Any spending beyond 1) intersection improvements at Alma/Exchange and Alma/McDermott, including additional turn lanes and coordinated timing of traffic lights and 2) completing the roadway north of Ridgeview Drive with additional lanes, drainage, and curbs, is not justified by quantifiable data.
- Any unjustified dollars should NOT be spent on this project, but rather redirected to projects that CAN meet the justification standard. Spending without justification is just plain irresponsible!

What can YOU do at this point? Put a check in each of the following To-Do's, today!

- Make your voice of opposition heard by signing our **"Stop Alma Widening" Online Petition** at www.ipetitions.com/petition/stop-alma-widening if you have not already done so. The petition currently has more than 1,530 signatures. There is no limit on the number of voting-age signers per address. However, you can only sign once. Updates are given to the city as the count grows.
- Join the conversation at the **"West Allen Residents" Facebook page**, set up specifically to keep neighbors like you informed about issues like this affecting our specific area of Allen. Log into Facebook, search "West Allen Residents," and click "Join Group." Once your request has been approved, you will have full access to our closed group, progress updates, and group meeting announcements.
- Receive "inside information" and actively participate in efforts to stop the widening by emailing "I Want In" (in Subject line) to zanelewis@att.net or bellesbuddy@gmail.com
- Contact each of your City Council Members to voice your concerns personally by either email or face-to-face conversations. Let them hear your concerns! E-mail addresses may be found at: www.cityofallen.org/957/About-City-Council

NOTE: The "Neighbors United" group leaders are meeting frequently with City and County elected officials to try to ensure that taxpayer dollars are applied appropriately and NOT wasted on projects that are unsafe and lack justification. Intersection improvements are desired – but not 6 lanes alongside residential areas!

In working with elected officials, the NU leaders have been successful in stopping (for now) Alma widening to 6 lanes from Exchange to Granger - an attempted "piggy-back" to the intersection changes promised to Sprouts. They have also gotten the Mayor to agree to investigate options for the use of the County money (possibly modifying the agreement between Allen and Collin County).

Your support will help keep the momentum going, and even increase it! **WE NEED YOUR VOICE!**