

Bluff Street Freeway?

The Dixie Metropolitan Planning Organization (DMPO) is planning to widen Bluff Street. Engineers are presently planning overpass/underpass "improvements" on Bluff Street designed to accommodate Average Daily Traffic of 70,000 vehicles (a volume of traffic only found on freeways). A total of at least \$85 million is scheduled to be spent to construct interchanges at Bluff/ Sunset, Bluff/Red Hills Parkway, Bluff/St. George Blvd and to widen Bluff from 85 feet to 132 feet. The Sunset overpass/underpass will take portions (7th and 8th holes) of the city owned Dixie Red Hills Golf Course. The street widening will require acquisition of parking lots, landscaping and buildings on both sides of Bluff Street. Only \$15 million was spent to improve St. George Boulevard recently with its tree lined center island. The DMPO plans to spend \$4 billion on roads and improvements by 2040 in their planning area so people can drive faster on the roads.

State of the art traffic engineering options that will reduce the project cost by more than \$50 million have been proposed but are being rejected by UDOT's consultants because they may not accommodate traffic volumes in excess of 65,000 ADT in the year 2040.



In 2009, UDOT projected 55,000 ADT on Bluff Street in 2035 using flawed population growth estimates that did not consider the recession. Traffic volumes have decreased from 46,000 in 2007 to 42,000 in 2010. Next year, when the new Dixie Center interchange is opened, additional traffic will be diverted from Bluff Street reducing its Average Daily Traffic to under 38,000. If the economy recovers in 2012, traffic volumes of even 50,000 are unlikely until after 2040. Building a freeway or freeway interchanges along this corridor contradicts principles adopted in the Vision Dixie initiative, will accelerate urban sprawl and put additional strain on all city provided services.

Bluff Street would benefit from the kind of improvements that were made recently along St. George Boulevard that can be constructed within the existing 85 foot right of way. If Bluff Street is allowed to accommodate freeway volumes of traffic, eventually all the businesses will fail because their customers will not fight through the high volumes of traffic to patronize them. There are "state of the art" engineering alternatives which have not been considered that do not require the negative impact on businesses along Bluff Street and require the building of overpass/underpass structures or widening Bluff Street, yet still accommodate free flowing traffic (up to 65,000 ADT) with shade trees, lower speeds and improved safety.

Tell the St George City Council Members your concerns. A hearing will be held Feb 15 St George City Hall. DMPO will have a transportation expo Feb 7 at the Dixie Center 11-7. Visit the DMPO web site <http://dixiempo.wordpress.com/home/> to read about their road plans for the Bluff Street Freeway and a highway through the Red Cliffs National Conservation Area (Washington Parkway). www.citizensfordixie.org