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Dear Mayor Mike Rawlings and Dallas City Council members:

As we ring in the New Year, it is AIA Dallas' resolution to be a better resource to you in matters of architecture and community design. To this end, we feel compelled to share with you some questions we have regarding the design of the Trinity Toll Road, as well as the role that the "Dream Team" and the local community will play in shaping this critical time in Dallas' history. We have two sets of questions to share with you: the first set of questions is in the attached letter that was shared with the "Dream Team" this past December and the second series of questions can be found below and are a follow-up to that Dream Team letter.

We hope you will take a moment to review these questions and share any insight with us as you navigate this challenging process. Although we know you all do not share the same opinions on the future of the Trinity Toll Road, we truly appreciate your thoughtful consideration and leadership on behalf of all Dallas residents because we know you all genuinely care about what is best for our great city's future.

With warm regards,

Jan Blackmon, FAIA
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QUESTIONS FROM AIA DALLAS REGARDING THE TRINITY TOLL ROAD

PART 1: Open letter to the Dream Team, December 2014.

December 5, 2014

In this holiday season we are reminded that we are shaped by what we love and we are judged by what we choose to cherish and protect. Our Mayor has invited you as a “Dream Team” of experts to engage in studying the current plans for a toll road within the Trinity. We at AIA Dallas are encouraged by the qualifications you bring to bear on this urgent conversation. For your effort to have a successful impact on the process and the future of Dallas it is imperative that you be empowered to engage the design challenge with a renewed vision for the potential of our river – a “connected vision plan” for Dallas Trinity Park.

To this end, we offer these questions and comments for your consideration:

1. Do we indeed have a traffic problem?

- Is our projected congestion of the magnitude that would require a high-speed limited access toll road to be built within the Trinity River levees? Is this prudent and fiscally responsible?
- A significant amount of our traffic congestion is generated by north-south thru-traffic that does not have a downtown destination or origin. Can this thru-traffic be rerouted around the city?
- There are numerous construction projects underway that address many of the outdated highway designs within the Dallas city center including the Horseshoe, Lower Stemmons and other components of Project Pegasus. When these are fully implemented, what will their impact be on traffic congestion? Is there still a need for a high-speed toll road?
- Generational differences in car ownership and driving preferences are profound and transformative. Has this shift in preference for more sustainable transportation options been factored into the transportation model that is influencing this project?
- DART has been a huge success for Dallas yet is not part of the plan for the Trinity corridor? Is there a role for DART to play here?
- Future development patterns indicate an increase in density as you move closer to the city center. Does this effort to create greater density in the city center change the need for a toll road?

2. Can a toll road really be a parkway?



The parkway as defined by the Balanced Vision Plan is the basis for design for this project. We are told that in order to generate sufficient revenue a toll road must be designed for faster traffic and with greater care for safety. Toll roads by their very nature require a high-speed design, limited on and off ramps, elevated flyovers, and crash barriers that are visual, and physical obstructions. Can a toll road be successful without these elements?

3. How about planning for pullouts along the Parkway?

Our Trinity Park must have pedestrian and automobile access to be the vibrant front door for our city as envisioned by the Balanced Vision Plan. It occurred to us that parkways that coexist successfully with parks do not dump cars into large parking lots from limited on/off ramps, but rather incorporate a necklace of small-scaled pullouts to park along the route. Can it really be a parkway if we do not have access to the park?

As architects and design professionals we have the training to visualize from the plan drawings the dramatic impact the proposed toll road will have on the Trinity River development. We are concerned that the public may not understand the true nature and scale of the proposed design, and we therefore recommend that your team include three-dimensional visualization as a tool for greater public understanding.

AIA Dallas appreciates the Dream Team's willingness to be part of this conversation, and we look forward to hearing your thoughts. We also invite our allied organizations and other concerned citizens to join us in a renewed commitment to a long-term vision for the Trinity River Corridor that preserves and protects a connection between our river, our neighborhoods and all of our residents. We believe that this connection will solidify us a first class city.

Lisa W. Lamkin, AIA
2014 AIA Dallas President



PART 2:

General

1. The current tollway plans are difficult for even trained professionals to read and visualize. What is being done to help illustrate in a three dimensional way to the general public what the proposed toll road will look like?
2. What environmental impact will the road have on the Trinity River, Trinity Forest and the park? We are concerned that traffic noise, localized air pollution from auto exhaust and chemical run-off from the road surface will be detrimental to the park experience.

Access

1. The areas on both sides of the Trinity are transforming into denser more connected neighborhoods, complete with housing, retail and a more interesting and walkable pedestrian experience. Has any thought been given to the impact that the construction (months, if not years long) as well as the placement of the road access at the front doors of these burgeoning businesses will have on these neighborhoods?
2. How do pedestrians and park-goers gain access to the park from the east levee? Is this going to be a positive experience for visitors to the park? As best we can tell, connectivity with the park will be achieved via a series of open-air pedestrian bridges (not that dissimilar from current pedestrian highway overpasses) with a long descent to the park's amenities below. Will ADA-required elevators be installed at each of these accesses points? Who is responsible for designing pedestrian and bicycle connections to the park and how are these being funded? How many and where are these proposed connections?

Mobility

1. How do other highway projects impact congestion? (Project Pegasus, Horseshoe, Southern Gateway, etc.)
2. Traffic studies don't seem to support the building of the toll road, why is this?

Dream Team



To date there has been very little transparency around the Dream Team's consulting efforts. AIA Dallas wants to be supportive of this process but we need reassurance that this will be transparent and inclusive process that will solicit and value stakeholder input.

To this end we ask the following questions:

1. What is the Dream Team's scope of work and who is providing direction and oversight?
2. What is the schedule for their scope and deliverables?
3. What is the process for public input?
4. What is the process for following the Dream Team results/recommendations?
5. What stakeholders are providing input and when?
6. Who is responsible for implementing the suggestions of the Dream Team and are they simply suggestions or will they be enacted upon?