
Shuttle Parking Lot Comment for P&Z

From Althea Johnson <althea.m.johnson@gmail.com>

Date Mon 9/30/2024 3:32 PM

To Cari Meyer <CMeyer@sedonaaz.gov>; Laura Stewart <LStewart@sedonaaz.gov>

Hello!

In anticipation for tomorrow's P&Z meeting we feel compelled to provide feedback and comments regarding the city's request for the approval of a CUP expanding the shuttle parking lot located at 1294 & 1406 SR 179.

Initially when we received the Notice of Public Hearing, first impressions were that this seemed somewhat reasonable, although a very big project. We, in all honesty, have not had the extreme negative impacts expected in the neighborhood from the use of the lot for the Trailhead Shuttles. However, this does not mean that we have had zero impacts. We do have an increase in cars along the street that are obviously looking for the shuttle; we have had cars park in front of our home at 171 Bowstring Dr, as we have the most cleared out front area of all the homes along the street. We have had trouble turning onto Bowstring Drive when traveling South on 179, especially during the busiest seasons, as cars are being stopped when the lot is full. Recently, I have noticed the golf carts used to transport shuttle/traffic attendants have started to travel along Bowstring to Arrow, instead of driving out on the sidewalk along 179. Additionally, we, as a neighborhood were ensured that the advertising for the Shuttle and the Lot would not explicitly indicate that it was located on Bowstring Dr. - to avoid riders searching for Bowstring and being lead along Arrow to access Bowstring by online map apps. However, online and in print, it clearly indicates Bowstring Dr. as the cross street. I have reached out to Roger Weber to make him aware and he did reply that he would look into it...

So, there are impacts...we have not become Back O' Beyond, for which we are grateful. However, this expansion is worrisome for many reasons.

I must step back for a moment and ensure that it is clear that in addition to living on Bowstring Dr. I am currently serving as the Vice Chair of the City's Tourism Advisory Board. I am acutely aware of the need for a robust and user friendly transit system throughout Sedona, and I support many aspects of the City's plans and efforts to mitigate traffic utilizing the Trailhead shuttles as one component of an extensive system to achieve these goals, and provide a positive experience for our tourists.

Pivoting back to specific concerns regarding the Shuttle Lot expansion - upon further consideration and following a walkabout through the property this past weekend during its operating hours, we must enthusiastically request a denial, or at least a request for alterations to the proposed expansion.

We are extremely concerned about the loss of old growth vegetation with the expansion of the parking lot. This loss will most definitely impact 179 travel noise for houses all along Bowstring Dr. Removing these trees is seemingly pushing this iteration of the project outside the boundaries of what is 'best' or even 'appropriate' for us as a neighborhood to expect, accept.

The City has stated in its Amendment request that,

"The area where the parking lot will be expanded to the south is currently in its natural state, which provides a landscaping buffer to the highway. During construction of the new parking area, as many existing plants as possible will be saved. If the existing plants do not meet LDC requirements for landscaping and screening, they will be supplemented with additional native plants from the City's plant list. Community Development Department Staff will verify compliance prior to completion of the project."

Walking the lot/property lines shows anyone that an expansion would remove nearly, if not all, of the trees at the south end of the lot, and there would be extremely limited space for any 'saving' or 'supplementing'. We were at a loss to understand how there was not, at minimum, a site visit planned for the P&Z Commissioners prior to this item coming to their meeting agenda.

My observations of when an area has to be 'graded' basically means completely leveled of all previous vegetation. This seems like a more realistic expectation of the outcome to make the extra spaces, or the bypass lane.

The additional 35 parking spaces, while at first may seem like a benefit to avoiding riders driving along Bowstring when they can't get in to the full lot; if you visit the site when the shuttle is running, even when the lot is not filled to capacity, with a limit of

15 seated riders, and 5 standing, there is not enough space for the riders desiring to get on the buses. We watched a group of 4 leave entirely when they couldn't get on. And on the next pass, there were 12 total riders who couldn't get on and would have to wait for the next shuttle. We certainly don't want to have an increase in the number of shuttles coming through to make up for the 55% increase in parking spaces.

The plan did not include a consideration of the pedestrian usage of Bowstring Dr. There are several residents who routinely walk the area. The road is already narrow and doesn't have great site lines for cars pulling right out of the lot when someone is walking up the road on the left hand side. And, when it is busy, cars drive ahead, turn around in the larger church parking lot and then come back down Bowstring to exit exacerbating the issue. A sidewalk, or safe right of way should be included in the Bypass lane plans.

I know that a request was sent to Cari Meyer asking that all homes within the neighborhood (and not just those within the typically required 300 feet) receive the Notice of Public Hearing, however, I am not sure this ended up happening?! A neighbor (outside 300') told us Saturday, he was completely unaware of the project. The Amendment states:

"Extensive public outreach was conducted in 2021 before the first CUP and additional public outreach was completed before the Minor Community Plan Amendment, Zone Change, and CUP in 2022. As there has been an extensive amount of public outreach in the past and the City has been operating a shuttle parking lot at this location with minimal complaints for over 2 years, an open house is not planned at this time. If significant public input is received based on the notification to the property owners, an open house may be scheduled."

Indeed extensive public outreach was conducted in 2021 and there were a LOT of concerns, however again, many of these have not come to fruition (and the make up of the neighborhood has also changed, with at least 4 homes changing ownership). And, this current request is actually making the BIG changes that were discussed only in hypotheticals at the time of this initial outreach. 'Significant public input' may not have been received at this time, again, if only those within 300 ft. have gotten notification, those that are not full time residents didn't get their letters, the extent of the project is not apparent to the residents. Also, there is nothing here that mentions how long will take, and at what cost. And, really, at what 'cost' to the neighborhood, and with the loss of shielding vegetation...

To recap —

Please deny the CUP in its current iteration because of -

- *Loss of a significant amount of old growth native vegetation where the new parking spaces would go taking away a sound absorbing barrier for the homes along Bowstring Dr.
- *Disingenuous promise to keep as much native landscape as possible, when the extensive requirements to grade even just the Shuttle Lane, will mean basically a smooth slate will be required.
- *Expanding parking, and keeping shuttle occupancy the same, will significantly increase the amount of riders left behind after each shuttle departure, making the need to expand the lot seem unnecessary
- *Lack of inclusion of a sidewalk, or safe right of way for access by walkers entering the neighborhood at 179 and Bowstring Dr., an already narrow roadway, without great site lines for cars turning out of Shuttle lot
- *Need for this level of project to conduct more, new outreach, or at least have P&Z walk the property to see the extent of potential change and loss of trees.

In conclusion, we hope you will deny this request in its current state. We, as residents and in support of tourism, support some aspects of this project - including the bathroom, water station (no more plastic bottles!), gaining back parking from moving the porta potties, increasing number of spots by removing potentially unnecessary extra curbs throughout (now with lighting), and a smart and vegetation respecting Shuttle bypass lane. Mitch fears that when projects get to this stage in the process, they are a foregone conclusion...we truly hope not in this circumstance!

Much thanks for your time and consideration.

Regards,

Althea Johnson

Mitch Witteman

Our 4 year old Vienna, and Keetna the dog

171 Bowstring Dr.

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Item 5A on P&Z committee Meeting at 4:30 pm this afternoon

From Scott S <pdspartner@gmail.com>

Date Tue 10/1/2024 8:42 AM

To Laura Stewart <LStewart@sedonaaz.gov>

I am a full time caregiver for my wife so I am unable to attend the 4:30 P&Z meeting today, Oct 1 2024. I wish to voice my thoughts regarding item 5A on the packet; amendment to the CUP for the trailhead shuttle parking.

Generally, we have been satisfied with the shuttle operations and believe it is a benefit to the community. The City is responsive to the occasional parking violations which occur on our street (Arrow Dr) when parking is unavailable in the lot. Our only concern is the removal of old growth Juniper and Pinion trees in the proposed expansion area. If there is a way for the City to save these trees and still accomplish what the intent is, we are in full support.

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"you can't run with the Cheetahs if you think like a Zebra..."