

Planning Staff Analysis

MPA24-0003d/Eagle Drive, Avenue A, and Welch City Council District #2 & District #3

REQUEST:

Modifying the current Secondary Arterial roadway functional classification to Collector classification in the Thoroughfare Plan on Eagle Drive between North Texas Blvd to South Carroll Blvd, Welch Street between Eagle Drive to West Oak Street, and Avenue A between Highway I-35E to Eagle.

SITE DATA:

The focus areas of Eagle Drive, Welch Street, and Avenue A are situated within and/or adjacent to the University of North Texas (UNT) campus boundary. The Denton 2040 Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map identifies this area as a Neighborhood/University Compatibility zone, while the Mobility Plan 2022 Update classifies these right-of-way corridors as Secondary Arterials. The existing design of these corridors are detailed below:

Eagle Drive

Eagle Drive is a two-way, east-west roadway extending from South Bell Avenue/Dallas Drive to North Texas Boulevard. The segment under study lies between South Carroll Boulevard and North Texas Boulevard. The existing development on the northern side of Eagle Drive comprises UNT campus buildings, student housing, and the IOOF Cemetery, whereas the southern side features a mix of stand-alone and horizontally integrated residential and commercial establishments. The right-of-way measures approximately 55-65 feet in width and includes one eastbound travel lane, one westbound travel lane, a center lane designated as a two-way left turn lane (TWLTL), and bike lanes on both sides. The speed limit is set at 30 mph.

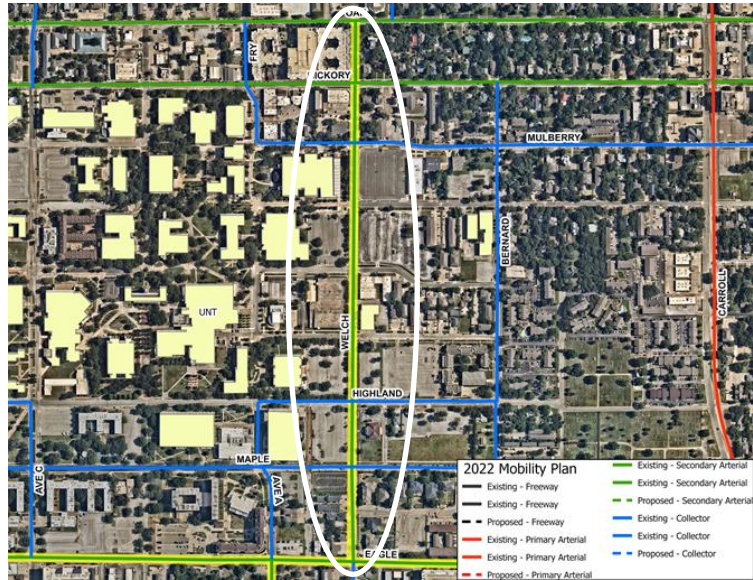
Eagle Drive serves as a heavily traveled major thoroughfare from the UNT campus into downtown Denton, characterized by significant pedestrian activity due to nearby commercial and retail establishments that attract students. The presence of residential apartments and parking lots flanking Eagle Drive contributes to substantial foot traffic, predominantly from individuals accessing UNT facilities, including the recreation center and Chestnut Hall wellness center.



Welch Street

Welch Street is a north-south roadway located between West Oak Street and West Collins Street. The segment under study, between Eagle Drive and West Oak Street, features the following lane configurations:

- Eagle Drive to Highland Road: One northbound travel lane and one southbound travel lane, with bike paths on both sides.
- Highland Road to Union Circle/West Prairie Street: Two northbound travel lanes and one southbound travel lane.
- Union Circle/West Prairie Street to West Mulberry Street: Two northbound travel lanes and two southbound travel lanes.
- West Mulberry Street to West Hickory Street: Two northbound travel lanes and one southbound travel lane.
- West Hickory Street to West Oak Street: One northbound travel lane and one southbound travel lane.



Welch Street is located within the UNT campus, featuring a right-of-way width ranging from approximately 45 to 65 feet and a speed limit of 20 mph within the study area. Existing developments along this corridor include multiple student residential apartments, Greek life houses, and facilities hosting clinical outreach programs on both sides of Welch Street. The presence of approximately ten surface parking lots results in a high volume of pedestrian activity along and across the street, posing safety challenges for students due to the mix of land uses and heavy vehicular traffic.

Avenue A

Avenue A is a north-south roadway extending from West Highland Street to I-35E. While the segment north of Eagle Drive is classified as a Collector, the portion under study, between Eagle Drive and I-35E, is classified as a Secondary Arterial. The street right-of-way measures approximately 50-65 feet in width and accommodates two northbound travel lanes and two southbound travel lanes, with a speed limit of 30 mph. Avenue A serves as the primary southern exit



for the UNT campus and features a mix of residential and commercial buildings on both sides of the studied area.

CONSIDERATIONS:

A. Section 2.7.1.D of the DDC provides the criteria for approval of Comprehensive Plan Amendments:

1. An application for a Comprehensive Plan amendment may be approved by the City Council only following a determination that the proposed amendment is consistent with the overall purpose and intent of the Comprehensive Plan and that any one of the following criteria has been met:

- a. *There was an error in the original Comprehensive Plan adoption;*
There was not an error in the original 2022 Mobility Plan adoption.
- b. *The City Council failed to take into account then-existing facts, projections, or trends that were reasonably foreseeable to exist in the future;*
The City Council did not fail to take into account the existing facts, projections, or trends. Recent development applications and inquiries in the area have brought to light the significant implications that a 110-foot wide right-of-way width would have in this already developed part of the city.
- c. *Events, trends, or facts after adoption of the Comprehensive Plan have changed the City Council's original findings made upon plan adoption; or*
Since the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, the continuous growth of the University of North Texas (UNT) and the increasing pedestrian traffic on and around the campus have raised safety concerns regarding walking and cycling along or across the target roads, specifically Eagle Dr, Welch St, and Avenue A, which are classified as Secondary Arterials in the 2022 Mobility Plan. Properties adjacent to these roads are predominantly owned by UNT and are almost entirely developed, either as part of the school campus or with private developments that support and contribute to the campus environment. Consequently, downgrading the current road classification to Collectors will enhance safety for students, improve connectivity with the surrounding road networks, and provide financial relief for the City by eliminating the need to acquire land for a 110-foot right-of-way (ROW) as required for a secondary arterial. This change will allow the existing ROW to be maintained for the proposed Collector Road classification.
- d. *Events, trends, or facts after adoption of the Comprehensive Plan have changed the character or condition of an area so as to make the proposed amendment necessary.*
See response to c. above as it is applicable to this criterion.

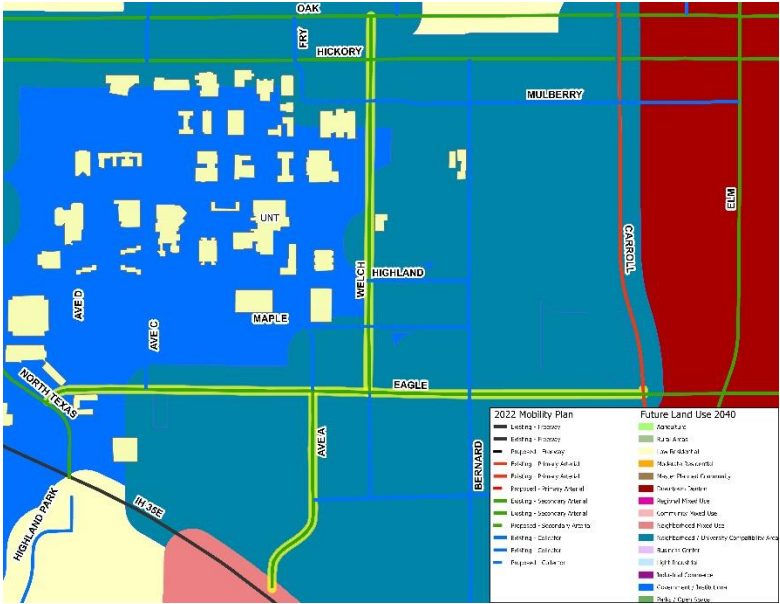
2. In addition to the above-listed criteria, any proposed amendment is subject to the following additional review standards:

- a. *That the amendment is not in conflict with any portion of the goals and policies of the plan.*

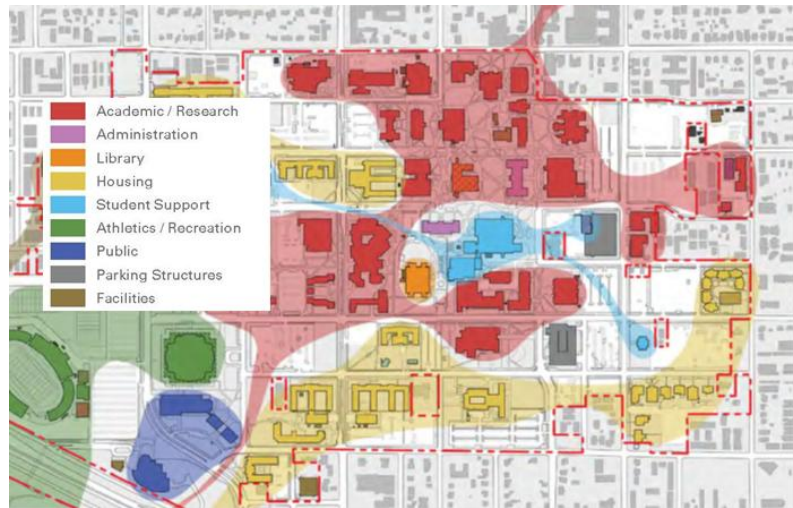
The proposed Mobility Plan amendment to the Thoroughfare Plan Map is not in conflict with the Comprehensive Plan and is specifically consistent with the following goals in the Denton 2040 Comprehensive Plan:

M-1: Provide for the safe, efficient movements of motor vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians in a sustainable way that complements Denton’s planned growth strategy.

The map below and provided as Exhibit 3 shows that the Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use map highlights the existing and future institutional (educational) development in the studied area by the color blue. By reclassifying the roadways from Secondary Arterial to Collector for Eagle, Welch, and Avenue A, the roadway network surrounding UNT will become more cohesive.



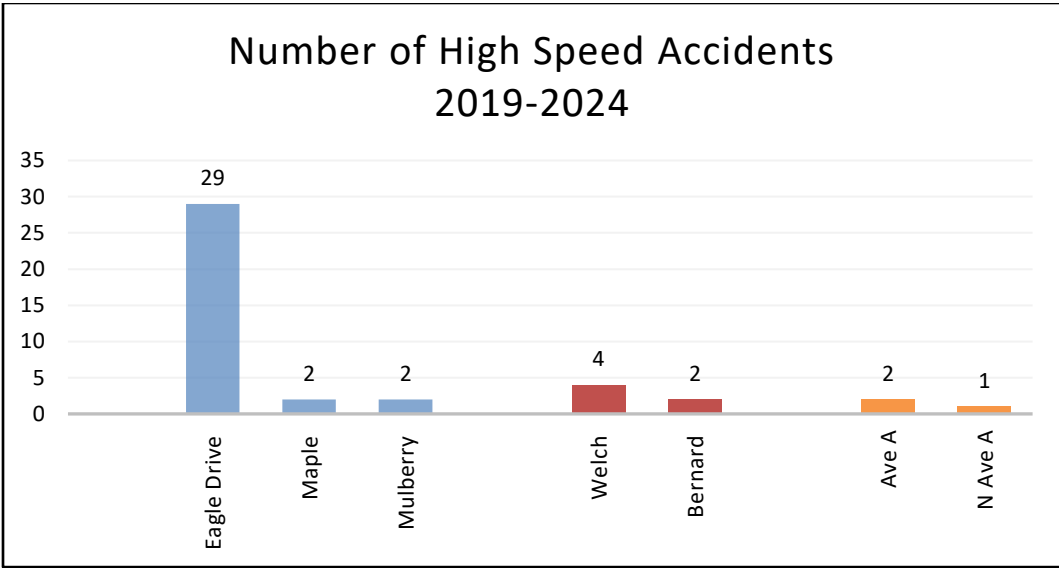
This change will enhance safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists by reducing the overall number of accidents and facilitating safer movement.



The UNT Master Plan also indicates the cluster of housing units by Eagle Dr and a mix of Student Support and academic / research buildings around Welch St.

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Additionally, the proposed Collector roadway classification will provide greater safety for pedestrian and cyclist traffic. The following chart compares the number of accidents due to the speed between the target Secondary Arterial roads and their adjacent Collector roads.



Considering the equal length and function of the compared streets, the double number of accidents on Avenue A and Welch shows the necessity of a traffic calming strategy on these roads. The Eagle Drive number of accidents is drastically different from the similar adjacent streets, as well. The high number of accidents shows the importance of managing the street and keeping the low-speed limit to provide safety for all.

Additionally, the target roads are located in the completely built and saturated zones, and most of the lands next to these roads are owned by UNT. Therefore, the feasibility of purchasing lands to provide 110’ ROW for Secondary Arterial would be challenging for the City. By modifying the current classification to Collector, the City does not need to change the current width of the target roads.

The proposed amendment is also consistent with the following goals outlined in the 2022 Mobility Plan:

- Goal 7: Implement “Complete Streets” Strategies on Roadways in Denton**
- Objective 7A: Create a transportation network that meets the mobility needs of all Denton residents, businesses, and visitors.
 - Strategy 7.2: Allow for flexible use of public rights-of-way to accommodate all uses of the street system while maintaining safety standards.

The proposed Collector classification will combine sufficient right-of-way width with flexible design to accommodate all users in a variety of land use contexts.

Goal 8: Promote a Friendly Active Transportation System in Denton

- Objective 8A: Expand, enhance, and protect the existing bicycle network to provide a comprehensive system of facilities, including a spectrum of shared streets, separated lanes, and off-street multi-use trails, to increase connectivity between homes, jobs, schools, transit, and recreational resources in Denton
 - Strategy 8.1: Develop an extensive bicycle and pedestrian backbone network through the use of standard and appropriate innovative treatments.

One primary purpose of the proposal is to create safe active transportation for everyone specially the UNT students.

The proposed amendment is also consistent with the following articles.

UNT Master plan

- Eagle Drive: increase student housing along the south edge of the campus (therefore, providing safe crossing)
- Avenue A-McCormick Street exit: improve access to the east campus parking lots
- Welch Street: provide pedestrian safety and traffic calming, elements including enhanced crossings by narrowing the roadway or providing textured paving, signage and lights

Oak Gateway Area Plan

AREA1-M1: Provide safe and accessible sidewalks and crosswalks to serve the needs of residents and businesses.

AreaPlan-M2: Continue coordination between the neighborhoods, UNT, and the City to identify and develop multiple ways to safely move through and around the area.

Ordinance No. 23-1289

Chapter 18, “Motor Vehicles and Traffic”, Article III, “Speed of Vehicles”, Section 18-73 “Speed Limits on Certain Roads and Highways”, set the speed limit of 20 mph for vehicles traveling upon Welch St from Hickory St. to Eagle Dr. which is aligned with the proposed Collector classification.

Report No. 2016-023

To reduce accidents and add bike lanes on Eagle Drive, from North Texas Boulevard to Cleveland Street, staff proposes reconfiguring the roadway from four lanes (without turn lanes) to three lanes (one travel lane in each direction with a two-way left-turn lane), along with a bike lane on each side. This approach, commonly known as a "Road Diet," is part of the Eagle Drive Street reconstruction. This proposed amendment aligns with the road diet initiative for Eagle Drive and will establish a safer bicycle network for those traveling to UNT. The new bike route will connect with the existing route on Avenue C and planned routes along North Texas Boulevard, Welch, Bernard, and Elm.

- b. *That the amendment constitutes a substantial benefit to the city and is not solely for the good or benefit of a particular landowner or owners at a particular point in time.*

The proposal will ensure adequate connectivity and safety for the current residents and future growth within the broader area.

- c. *The extent to which the proposed amendment and other amendments in the general area are compatible with the land use goals of the plan and that they avoid creation of isolated uses that will cause incompatible community form and a burden on public services and facilities.*

The proposal to change the classification of Eagle Dr, Welch St, and Avenue A from Secondary Arterial to Collector roadways is compatible with the land use goals, as it supports the roadway connectivity and safety around the UNT.

- d. *That the development pattern contained in the existing plan does not provide adequate and appropriate optional sites for the use or change being proposed in the amendment.*

Currently, all target roads are classified as Secondary Arterials. These roads are in close proximity to the UNT campus, with numerous university facilities and parking lots on both sides. While Avenue A and the southern side of Eagle Drive are somewhat detached from the main campus, they are situated in a densely developed area. Acquiring land from adjacent properties to widen the right-of-way to accommodate a typical Secondary Arterial is challenging and often impractical. Moreover, the growth of UNT's community and the resulting increase in pedestrian activity along these corridors highlight the urgent need to prioritize safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

- e. *That the impact of the amendment, when considered cumulatively with other applications and development in the general area, will not adversely impact the city or a portion of the city by:*

- i. *Significantly altering acceptable existing land use patterns;*

The proposed modification to the Mobility Plan would not negatively alter the existing land use pattern.

- ii. *Having significant adverse impacts on public services and facilities that are needed to support the current land use and that cannot be mitigated to the maximum extent feasible;*

The proposal would not significantly adversely impact public services and facilities to support the current and future land use.

- iii. *Adversely impacting environmentally sensitive areas or resources; or*

There are no environmentally sensitive areas identified within or adjacent to the target roads. The proposed modification to the Mobility Plan would not limit the City's ability to regulate tree preservation and development activity within Environmentally Sensitive Areas.

- iv. *Adversely impacting existing uses because of increased traffic on existing systems.*

By reclassifying the roads from Secondary Arterial to Collector, property owners and future developments will no longer need to dedicate right-of-way (ROW) for the full 110-foot width required for Secondary Arterials. This change also alleviates the City's need to purchase land for this expanded ROW. The current widths of the target roads - Eagle (55-65 feet), Welch (45-65 feet), and Avenue A (50-65 feet) - will remain largely unchanged under the Collector classification, which has a maximum width of 65 feet.

Current traffic counts indicate that these road widths are sufficient for smooth traffic flow during both normal and peak hours. The existing speed limits—30 mph on Eagle Dr and Avenue A, and 20 mph on Welch Street align well with the proposed Collector classification.

- f. *That site conditions, including but not limited to topography, utility corridors/easements, drainage patterns, noise, odors, or environmental contamination, would make development under the current plan designation inappropriate.*

The proposed amendment will not have any inappropriate impact on topography, utility corridors/easements, drainage patterns, noise, odors, or environmental contamination.