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Arlington seeks public input on Abram Street rebuild through downtown

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ARLINGTON — -- Abram Street through downtown will be rebuilt in the coming years but how it will look — and how many lanes it will be — has yet to be determined.

Residents and business owners have their chance to weigh in on Abram's future during a public workshop next week. The input will help city leaders choose how many lanes Abram will be reduced by when it is eventually rebuilt between Cooper and Collins streets and what types of pedestrian amenities will be included, city officials said.

"We are trying to balance vehicle traffic with enhancements for pedestrians. It's challenging." Public Works and Transportation Director Keith Melton said. Hopefully we can find a compromise."

Abram Street is currently five lanes — two lanes in each direction with a center turn lane — through downtown. City leaders are considering taking out one or more lanes to free up space for pedestrian amenities, such as wider sidewalks, benches and landscaping, to encourage redevelopment.

Three options are proposed: narrowing Abram to either three lanes or four lanes for the entire stretch between Cooper and Collins streets or narrowing a shorter section to four lanes between West Street and the Tarrant County Subcourthouse.

City officials will present the public with those proposals during the workshop, scheduled for 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday at the Arlington Convention Center, 1200 Ballpark Way. Participants will be asked to provide feedback or make an alternative recommendation.

While some residents and downtown property owners have opposed reducing Abram Street by any lanes, saying they were concerned about increased traffic congestion, the city does not plan to rebuild Abram through downtown as wide as it is. Arlington is also not considering making Abram a two-lane street, Melton said.

A pedestrian-friendly downtown is one of the goals adopted in 2004 as part of a vision for the heart of the city.

Tony Rutigliano, Downtown Arlington Management Corp. president, called Abram Street crucial to the downtown redevelopment strategy. The downtown group wants to create an environment in which visitors feel safe getting out of their vehicles to walk to shops, restaurants and entertainment venues.

"This is an important conversation. We need to ask, 'What do we want downtown to be?'" Rutigliano said. "If we want downtown to be a vibrant, attractive place, then traffic has got to take a secondary role in that conversation."

Arlington voters approved nearly \$22 million in the 2008 bond election to rebuild Abram from Cooper to the Grand Prairie city limits.

Residents unable to attend the workshop can contact Bob Watson at [817-459-6582](tel:817-459-6582) or Bob.Watson@arlingtontx.gov for more information.

This report includes material from the Star-Telegram archives.

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