

Dear Neighbors,

Yesterday I received the reminder from the Rio Grande Neighborhood Association regarding the roundabout survey. There are only a few questions on [the survey](#), with additional space for comments. Writing comments for the survey, really made me think. I'd like to take this opportunity to share my comments with you.

Let me preface this with one thing: this letter is LONG. **If you want to cut to the chase, just read the items that are RED.** Otherwise, grab a cup of coffee, and settle in for the read (smile).

First off, I can't believe the decision to move forward on the roundabout is STILL being addressed.

I first heard of the proposed roundabout about 5 years ago. Because I live close to the intersection of Rio Grande and Candelaria in Amber Place, and because I *care* about my neighborhood, I made it a point to attend the very first meeting. My goal was simple: to educate myself. I went with an open mind – neither for nor against any proposed solution. The meeting was very informative. There was a lot I took away from it. By attending many of the meetings that have taken place since, I have learned a lot about roundabouts – and specifically how this roundabout would impact my neighborhood.

After the first few meetings, I was behind the project 100%. The reason why? It completely makes sense. **I firmly believe the roundabout is not only needed at the intersection of Rio Grande and Candelaria for the sake of safety, but that ultimately it will preserve – if not increase – property values. It is the perfect complement to the City of ABQ's vision for Rio Grande: to enhance areas along the Rio Grande for visitors to Albuquerque and to improve access and quality of life for local residents.**

I am surprised people claim they haven't heard about the proposed roundabout until recently. I haven't done anything to go out of my way to find out about these meetings. A simple reminder in my email from my neighborhood association was all it took. There have been numerous meetings providing many opportunities for neighbors to learn, and voice their opinion about the proposed roundabout. Not to sound too pessimistic, but my guess is it is the typical complacency that exists in any neighborhood. Until someone made it their mission to try to get the roundabout stopped – no one actually cared.

**I found it disheartening to see so many jump on the recent bandwagon to oppose the roundabout – without first taking the time to educate themselves.** It reminds me of old school medicine. You visit the doctor. The doctor prescribes the medicine. You take it. No questions asked. Sure, it takes some effort on our part to truly educate ourselves – whether it's alternatives to the medicine the doctor prescribed – or facts about safety on our roadways. It's much easier to just take the medicine – or jump on the bandwagon.

I mentioned earlier that my first reaction to the survey was astonishment that yet another survey was taking place. But I was in for even more surprises when I got to Councilor Roxanna Meyers' webpage. And no – it wasn't just the strange URL ([abqsoul.org](#)) that others have cited.

**The big shocker was the lack of facts.**

**Below are the *only* 'facts' offered on Councilor Meyers' site prefacing the survey:** (copy and pasted from her website)

### **The Facts about the Rio Grande Blvd & Candelaria Intersection:**

In 2011 there was an average of 15,150 cars approaching the intersection each day (average weekday) which would equal 3,939,000 cars during the weekdays of 2011.

In the years of 2010, 2009, 2008 there were 8, 6 and 8 accidents reported, respectively.

In the years 2010 and 2009 none of the reported accidents involved a Pedestrian or Bicyclist. In the year 2008 one of the accidents involved a Pedestrian.

In 2008 Speed Radar Detection Signs were installed and the striping was refreshed.

Between 2006 and 2007 the left turn lane was put in place on Candelaria (where you are westbound turning to go southbound on Rio Grande Blvd).

### **The Facts about the Cost of the Proposed Rio Grande Blvd & Candelaria Roundabout:**

The Roundabout will cost approximately \$1,500,000.

If there is a decision made not to proceed with the Roundabout at this location, where does the money go?

- \$1,000,000 of the money would go back to the State of NM to use on other transportation projects.
- \$500,000 would go back to the City of Albuquerque's General Capital Improvement Funds.

### **That was it. Let's think about this...**

**Constituents have complained that they never heard about planning meetings. And now, all they see on this survey, are a handful of 'facts' – that in my opinion – were designed to be leading. Will this survey produce satisfactory and statistically accurate results?**

I'd like to share with you some of the facts\* that were not included on Councilor Meyers' website.

### **The roundabout would provide:**

- a 90% reduction in fatalities
- a 76% reduction in injuries
- a 35% reduction in pedestrian accidents
- a 50% increase in traffic capacity
- a 65% reduction in traffic delays

### **The roundabout has specifically taken into consideration, and was designed:**

- for ease of accessibility by emergency vehicles. Because there are no stops, it also improves expedience in arriving on the scene.
- for bikes to be able to easily integrate with the flow of traffic

### **The roundabout saves money in the long run:**

- approximately 25% less (1 traffic signal costs \$150,000 x 4 = \$600,000, paving adds an additional \$100,000 to \$400,000)
- the roundabout save \$4000-\$10000 per year in electricity (no stop lights). Saves money. Good for the environment.

### **The roundabout is the environmentally friendly approach to take, providing:**

- a 42% reduction in pollution
- a 30% savings in fuel use
- a reduction in noise: no stop vehicles revving their engines

### **It adds value to Rio Grande and home owners:**

- it offers a 26% decrease in paving

## **The roundabout offers enhanced landscaping for our neighborhood. Beautifying our neighborhood increases property values!**

Speaking of money....on Councilor Meyers' website we are led to believe that if people say 'NO' to the roundabout, \$1,000,000 of the money would go back to the State of NM to use on other transportation projects, and \$500,000 would go back to the City of Albuquerque's General Capital Improvement Funds.

Is this accurate?

The roundabout at Candelaria Road NW and Rio Grande Boulevard NW *was the only project in New Mexico to receive full Federal Safety funding: \$1,150,000 (\$1 million for construction; \$150,000 for design\*\**. Since the Federal government provided funding, if the roundabout didn't go through as planned, the new project would have to meet Federal Safety criteria to utilize the funding.

### ***Did I mention this was the only project proposed in New Mexico to receive full Federal Safety funding?***

Since knowledge is power, here's a little more information I'd like to share.

**Did you know that there are currently, 56 vehicle and pedestrian conflict points in the intersection? How did this happen? Why was this intersection so poorly planned?** Well, as explained at the very first meeting, *Rio Grande Blvd. was never designed to be four lanes*. When it was made four lanes, homes already existed along the corridors, and intersections already existed. Since it wasn't an option to move houses, they opted to live with it. *This is the reason the radius of the turns at Rio Grande and Candelaria are too sharp by current standards. This also explains why this intersection has triple the average rate (300%) more accidents with pedestrians than the rest of ABQ.*

Unfortunately, I experienced this first hand one morning. I was heading west on Candelaria towards the intersection when I witnessed a car that was heading South on Rio Grande, make the sharp turn onto Candelaria heading east. Naturally, the driver was exceeding the speed limit by about 10mph – which is near the average excessive speed (8mph) at the intersection. The driver went over the curb, and hit the wooden utility pole. It was bizarre to watch. The pole cracked, and my fear was that it was going to fall on the car. It was a young driver (16 years old) and a 15 year old passenger. Fortunately, young people have fantastic reflexes. They were out of the car within an instant. The air bags deployed as well, so I was glad to see they were able to get out.

I stopped and went over to see if I could assist. The police were called, and because the girls were underage, I asked them to call their moms. Fortunately, neither of them were seriously injured – and primarily suffered the embarrassment that ensued for months after: their prestige license plate that came off the car during the incident, was proudly nailed out of reach when PNM came and replaced the utility pole.

*Which makes me think - not only do we save electricity costs with the roundabout, we save costs in repairing electrical poles, sidewalks and curbs, not to mention neighbors' walls and fences that repeatedly are damaged in this poorly designed intersection.*

**Do you know what the speed limit is at the intersection?** Don't worry - not many people do. It is 35mph. *The average speed clocked at the intersection is 43 mph – 8 mph above the speed limit.* During the July 2010 Charrette regarding the intersection (yes, yet another extensive multi-day

feasibility and planning event that the public was invited to attend and provide hands-on participation) – **170 cars were clocked at speeds of 51-70 mph!**

Time for a little game...now, remember 170 cars were clocked at 51-70mph going through the intersection of Rio Grande and Candelaria. **If you were a pedestrian crossing the intersection and got hit by one of these cars, what is the likelihood that you would be killed?**

I don't know the exact answer to this question, but I do know:

- if you were hit by a car going 30mph - just under the current speed limit, there is a 45% probability you'd be dead.
- if you were hit by a car that was going 40mph - about the speed of the young girl I saw who hit the utility pole, there is a 85% probability you would be dead.

**So my guess is, if you were to have been hit by one of the vehicles clocked at 51-70mph over the speed limit, there would probably be a 99.% chance you would not survive.**

If you don't live in the neighborhood, or don't regularly walk or ride your bike through the intersection, maybe this doesn't hit home. But *I do live in this neighborhood. And I regularly ride my bike through this intersection.* When I stop to think about it – it's bizarre. I am a breast cancer survivor. I had somewhere near a 50/50 chance of survival. It's strange to think that I have a higher chance of dying if someone hit me while I was riding my bike through this intersection, than dying from cancer.

**The sad part? With the roundabout it is preventable.**

Did you know, that at 20mph – the proposed speed for the roundabout – there is only a 5% chance of a pedestrian dying if they get hit? The potential for significant injury is also significantly minimized.

So I ask you – please educate yourself. Get the facts. And then show your support of the roundabout by [voting YES on the survey](#) – we only have until February 18th to have our voices heard!

**Deaths in this intersection are preventable. Please do your part and make your voice heard.**

with respect,

Elaine Montoya  
one of your neighbors

\*facts cited in this letter can be found on:

- The Rio Grande Blvd Neighborhood Association [website](#)
- [Timeline](#) on the effort regarding this project
- Former Senator Feldman's [website](#)