Letter to University City Residents on UC Traffic Issues,
Regents Road Bridge and Genesee Widening
(sent July 2, 2002)

Thank you for your continued interest in solutions to the traffic problems in University City. You may have attended the University City Planning Group meeting on June 11 to hear about plans related to the Regents Road Bridge and Genesee widening projects, and it was great to see so many UC residents actively participating in this community discussion.

I recognize that these projects are significant and can be emotional. These issues have the potential to divide the University City community, and as you are aware, whatever decision is ultimately made will almost certainly upset one part of the community or another. My hope is that we can discuss our options civilly without fracturing the community. We all want to enjoy our neighborhood and we will need to work together on other important issues down the road. Due to the process involved, which I explain below, the decision on how to proceed will not happen over night. In fact, there is at least a year and a half environmental review process required by the California Environmental Quality Act. Nor is there any advantage to a rush to judgment; funding will not be available in the Facilities Benefit Assessment ("FBA") for Genesee until 2005 and Regents until 2007. Therefore, it is important that we keep cool heads and approach the issue with as much courtesy and calm as we can muster during the review process.

Some in the community have circulated information saying that I have taken a position on these projects. I want to reiterate what I said at the June 11 meeting -- I will not take a position on these projects until the environmental review process has been completed and **ALL** the relevant information is gathered. All sides have specific concerns that need to be addressed, and I intend to make a decision based upon the facts, not on rhetoric or hyperbole. I believe I owe that to the community as a whole.

I would like to recap the information and actions that were taken at the University City Planning Group meeting last week and explain what will happen next.

The Meeting:

City Staff presented an overview of the 1997 University City Traffic Study and included new information about the effect of the Nobel Interchange on traffic circulation in University City. The traffic engineering department reported that there was not a significant change in traffic counts on Genesee due to the opening of the Nobel Interchange, and recommended that an Environmental Impact Report ("EIR") be initiated to look at the best course of action to proceed using traffic improvements planned for in the University City Community Plan. The University City Planning Group voted to support the recommendation offered by City staff to prepare an EIR. The Planning Group specifically decided not to approve two proposals for specific actions.

As I explained at the meeting, the California Environmental Quality Act mandates that an EIR be completed before we make a decision, whether we decide to remove these projects from the University City Community Plan or construct them as currently planned. An EIR is required to build either project or remove either project from the Community Plan. Though various studies have taken place over the years, an EIR has never been completed. Again, this analysis is not optional, the report is a legal step that must be taken regardless of the decisions made on these projects.

The EIR will evaluate the circulation options available in the community plan. The EIR will evaluate the impacts of only building the Regents Road bridge, only widening Genesee, constructing the bridge and widening Genessee, or doing no project at all. The EIR will be a comprehensive document that will allow an informed decision on how to move forward.

What comes next:

In the next few months, City staff will be looking for a qualified, independent engineering firm to conduct the EIR. Once they have selected a candidate, they will present their choice to the City Council for initiation of the process. After the engineering firm has been chosen, the next step will be to hold a public scoping meeting. This will provide the community with the opportunity to suggest what issues they believe should be studied in the EIR. I urge residents to attend this meeting and to express the concerns and comments shared with me over the last few months.

After the scoping meetings have been completed the engineering firm will begin its work of evaluating the impacts of the four options mentioned above. This process will take at least a year. After the process is complete, we will be able to have a productive discussion based upon facts and thoroughly evaluated impacts. I look forward to this discussion, and look forward to your continued participation in the process.

Finally, a number of residents on all sides of the issue expressed support for my position on a Transit First plan for University City. You may be aware that the City and the Metropolitan Transit Development Board are currently evaluating alignments and costs for this innovative transportation strategy. The implementation of Transit First will itself result in the need for a community plan amendment, which will also require environmental review. That process is already underway, and some people at the June 11 meeting suggested that Transit First planning could be coordinated with the Regents/Genesee study. Although their coordination could delay a final decision on Regents and Genesee even further, I want to emphasize that this would in and of itself result in no delay to construction of Regents or Genessee (if we decide to construct them) since the projects would not be fully-funded and ready for construction until 2005 for Genesee and 2007 for Regents. I hope that residents from North and South UC will participate in Transit First planning also.

If you would like to receive future updates via e-mail or post, please e-mail me at scottpeters@sandiego.gov or visit my web site by going to www.sandiego.gov and

clicking on "City Hall." Coming in the near future, my web site will have an entire section where you can access accurate and current information on these projects. If you do not have access to e-mail, please write to me and request that you be kept updated on the process.

My hope is that we will have an open and responsive process that allows all members of the community to weigh in on the proposals to create a better future for University City. I look forward to working with you and hearing your input.

Sincerley,

Scott Peters