

BOARD OF REGENTS

BRIEFING PAPER

1. AGENDA ITEM TITLE: Clark County Public Works Tropicana Ave./University Center Drive Intersection Grade Separated Roadway Project Update

MEETING DATE: May 21, 2026

2. BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:

Clark County has explored efforts for roadway improvements in the area of the Las Vegas Strip, Harry Reid International Airport, and UNLV corridor for several years to improve regional traffic flow in the area, as well as access to and from the Las Vegas Strip and Harry Reid International Airport.

The original concept proposed an elevated expressway with two components to improve vehicular movement within the central hospitality corridor: one along University Center Drive/Paradise Road between Hacienda Ave. and Sands/Twain Avenues, and another one along Koval Lane between Sands and Tropicana Avenues. Clark County abandoned the original scope in December 2017, then re-engaged UNLV in early 2018 with a reduced-scope alternative, known as the Tropicana/University Center Grade Separation Project, focused on the University Center Drive/Paradise Road corridor between Hacienda Ave. and Naples Street. This revised proposal was brought to the Board of Regents at an October 2018 special meeting, where the UNLV President and Clark County representatives presented the project scope and invited regents' input on a collaborative framework.

At that time, UNLV completed a formal impact study involving three consultants: Kimley-Horn and Associates (traffic and access), JABarrett Company (economic, noise, land-use, and view impacts), and CSL International (signage, branding, and digital advertising). The findings, presented to the Board of Regents at a November 2018 special meeting, concluded that while the proposed elevated expressway would improve traffic flow at the Tropicana/Swenson and Tropicana/Paradise intersections, it would also create significant adverse impacts on UNLV. Economic losses to campus land value and facility function at that time were estimated at \$11.5 million to \$14.5 million in total, including an approximately 84% reduction in branding visibility and an 83% reduction in marquee and billboard value at the Tropicana/Swenson intersection. Additional concerns included potential public safety issues beneath the structure, downstream traffic congestion at secondary intersections, and the threat to UNLV's visibility and connection to the broader community. Several regents expressed concern at that meeting. Notably, Clark County had already placed the project on hold on October 5, 2018, pending discussions on impact assessment and mitigation.

As discussions between County and UNLV representatives continued on the progress of the roadway project, an update was presented to the Board of Regents at an August 2020 special meeting. In July 2020, Clark County had presented three alternatives to the Board of County Commissioners: two elevated roadway options (estimated at \$78 million and \$90 million, respectively) and a Depressed Roadway/Diverging Diamond Interchange (DDI) Alternative (estimated at \$150 million). The County Commissioners selected the DDI Alternative as offering the best balance of traffic improvements, safety measures, and long-term community value. UNLV endorsed the DDI Alternative, noting it would significantly reduce visibility impacts on the Maryland Campus and the Thomas and Mack Center/Cox Pavilion/Mendenhall events complex compared to the elevated options. UNLV also signaled its intent to provide right-of-way support at no cost to Clark County for both the DDI Alternative and a related roadway, Tompkins Avenue, planned generally between Koval Lane and Paradise Road, with an alignment traversing the northern edge of UNLV's 42-acre parcel near Tropicana Ave. and Koval Lane.

The most recent update was presented at the Board of Regents' March 2025 quarterly meeting, where UNLV asked the Board to authorize land dedications, easements, and associated agreements to enable Clark County to proceed with construction, then anticipated to begin in the second half of 2025. The specific items included: a dedication of approximately 2.55 acres from the UNLV 42-acre parcel for Tompkins Avenue; a dedication of approximately 3.64 acres from the southern edge of the Maryland Campus for the DDI Alternative; a temporary construction easement of approximately 1.59 acres; a wall maintenance easement for the north facing retaining wall of the DDI Alternative; and an MOU/License and Maintenance Agreement permitting UNLV students to paint the wall facing the Scarlet parking lot as part of a campus public art program. UNLV estimated the combined land value of the permanent dedications at \$15 million to \$20 million, and the total Clark County investment in both projects at over \$150 million. Consistent with its collaborative approach throughout the project, UNLV agreed to provide the dedications and easements at no cost to Clark County in support of the preferred project alternative.

Recently, Clark County advised UNLV that updated cost estimates for the DDI project, now estimated at approximately \$210 million, have prompted the County to further evaluate the project and potential alternatives. Given the project's

progression over the past several years and the Board of Regents' prior involvement, this update provides an important opportunity for the Board to receive up-to-date information from Clark County on the project's status, ongoing evaluation efforts, and potential next steps.

3. SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:

University of Nevada, Las Vegas Interim President Chris Heavey and representatives from Clark County will present for information an update related to the grade separated roadway project at the intersection of Tropicana Avenue and University Center Drive.

4. IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):

As Clark County continues to evaluate project scope, costs, and potential approaches, it is timely for the Board of Regents to receive an informational update on the project and potential next steps and to have the opportunity to provide input.

5. CHECK THE NSHE STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL THAT IS SUPPORTED BY THIS REQUEST:

- ☐ Access (Increase access to higher education)
- ☐ Success (Improve student success)
- ☐ Close Institutional Performance Gaps
- ☐ Workforce (Meet workforce needs in Nevada)
- ☐ Research (Increase solutions-focused research)
- ☒ Coordination, Accountability, and Transparency (Ensure system coordination, accountability, and transparency)
- ☐ Not Applicable to NSHE Strategic Plan Goals

6. INDICATE HOW THE PROPOSAL SUPPORTS THE SPECIFIC STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL

Given the project's progression over the past several years and the Board of Regents' prior involvement, this update provides an important opportunity for the Board to receive up-to-date information from Clark County on the project's status, ongoing evaluation efforts, and potential next steps, while also providing an opportunity for the Board of Regents to offer input, which enhances coordination and supports continued collaboration with Clark County.

7. BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

N/A. This item is for information only.

8. POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

N/A. This item is for information only.

9. ALTERNATIVE(S) TO WHAT IS BEING REQUESTED/RECOMMENDED:

N/A. This item is for information only.

10. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE:

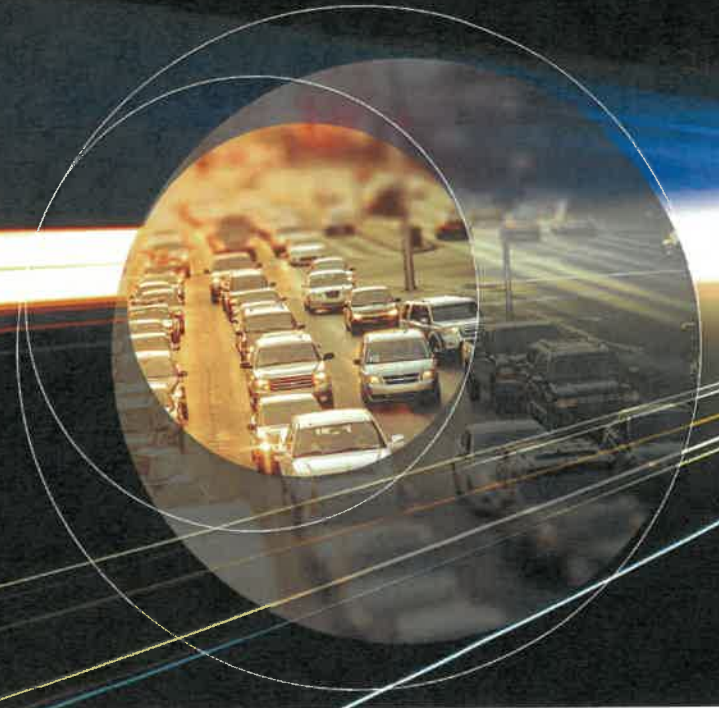
N/A. This item is for information only.

11. COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:

- ☐ Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title # _____ Chapter # _____ Section # _____
- ☐ Amends Current Board Policy: Title # _____ Chapter # _____ Section # _____
- ☐ Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter # _____ Section # _____
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☒ Fiscal Impact: Yes _____ No X _____
Explain: _____

Tropicana/University Center Drive Grade Separation Project

Clark County Public Works



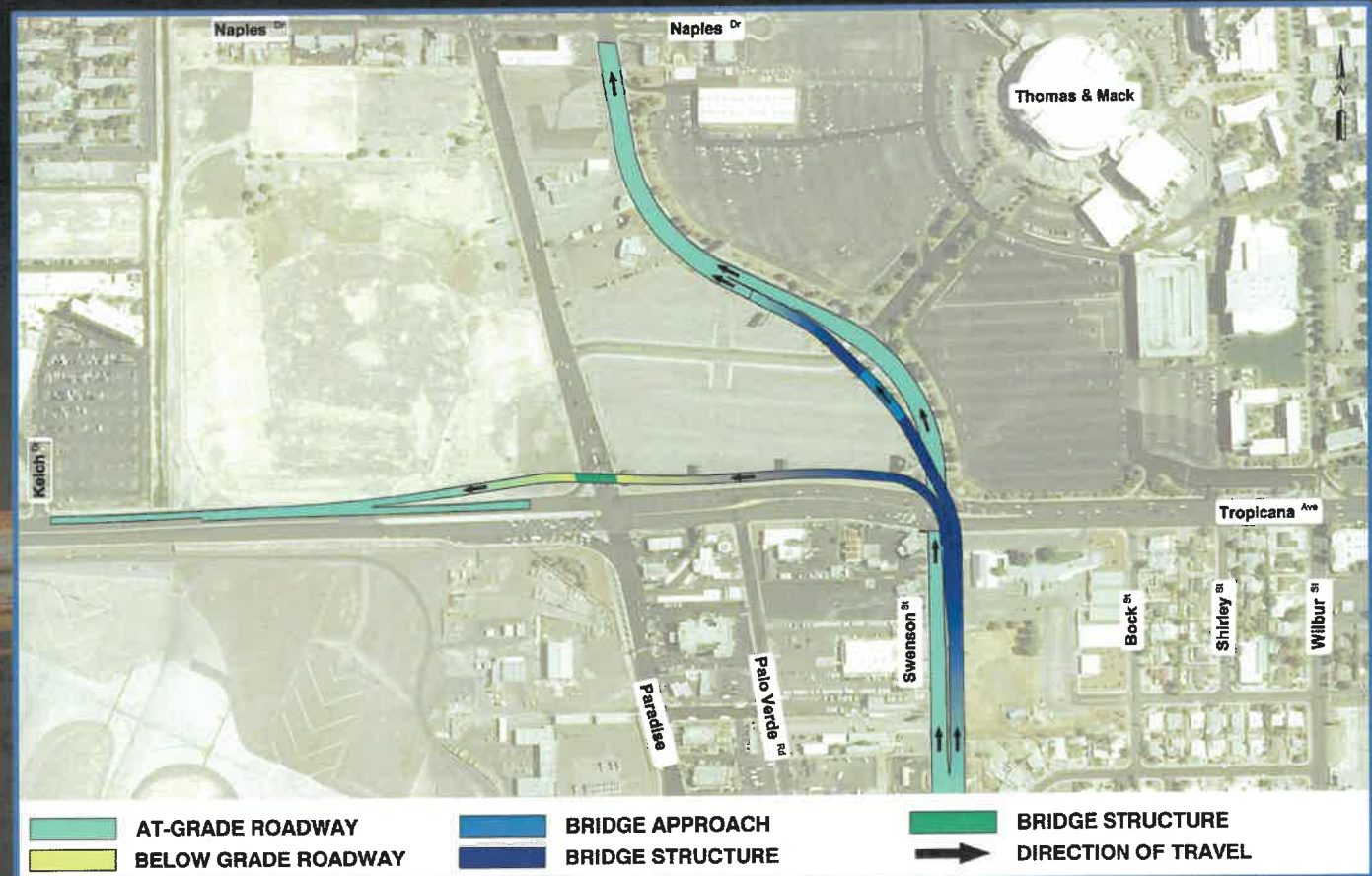
Purpose of this project:



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- Relieve Congestion
 - Improve Safety
 - Improve access for airport traffic traveling to the Resort Corridor
 - Improve access for traffic traveling north via University Center Drive (UCD)
 - Improve access for traffic traveling to airport via Paradise Road
 - Improve access for traffic traveling south via Paradise Road
 - Improve access for traffic traveling to and from Thomas & Mack and the University.

Initial Proposal for Overpass:

- UCD over Tropicana:
Free-flowing NB to WB and NB to NB traffic
- Tropicana & UCD intersection maintained
- Structure extended north of Thomas and Mack Drive
- Estimated Cost \$78M (2019)



Original DDI:

- Tropicana: Both EB & WB below grade
- Tropicana: Free-flowing Wilbur to Koval
- 7 Bridges
- Separate access to TNC lot
- Elevated pedestrian access across UCD required
- Presence of groundwater requires a pump house
- Estimated Cost \$195M (2019)



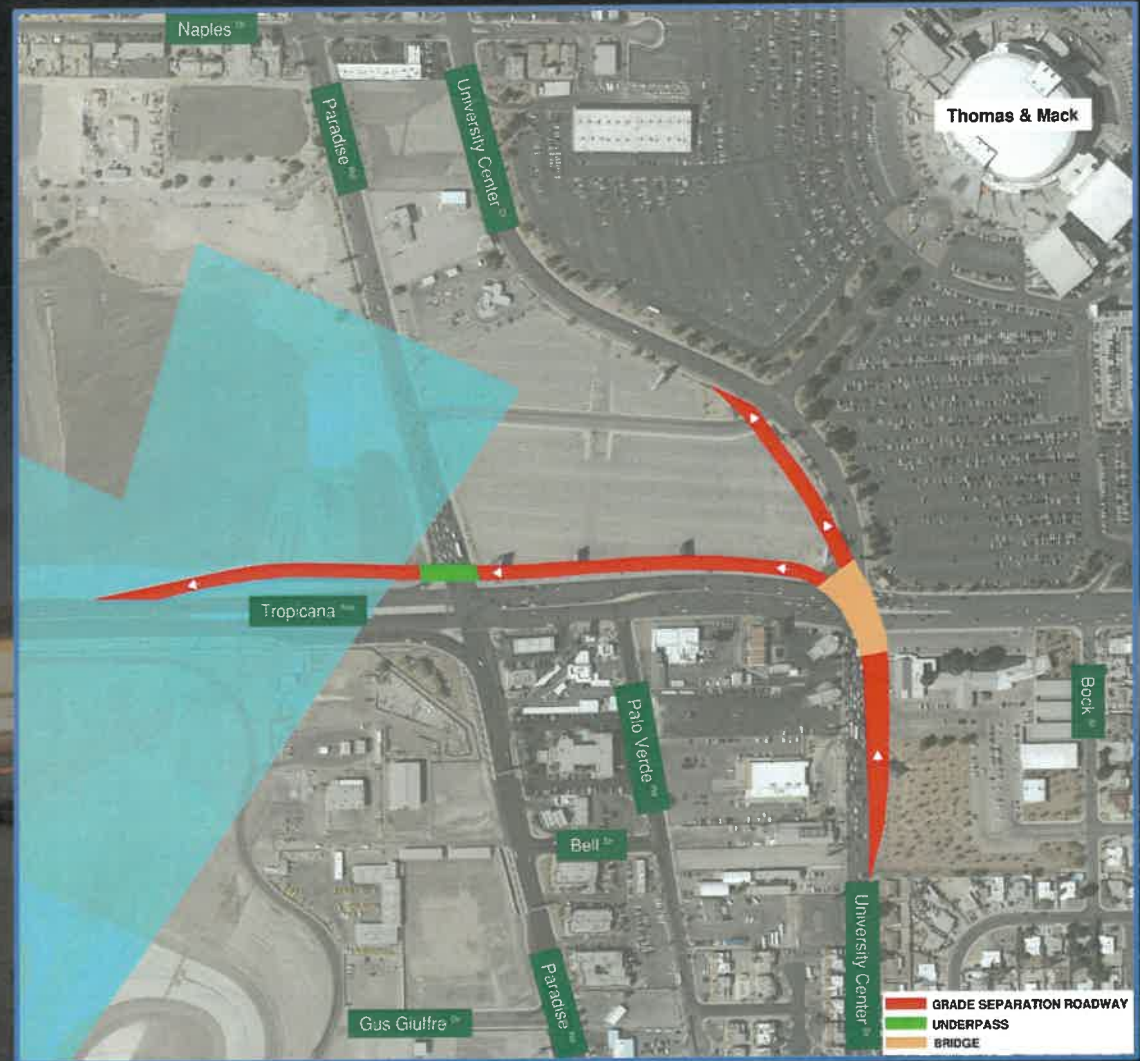
Reduced DDI:

- To reduce cost:
Switched EB Tropicana to at-grade
- New Traffic Signals at UCD and Paradise
- Revised Cost \$115M (2023)
- Current Estimated Cost \$210M



Revised Overpass:

- Reducing the total length by approximately 400 ft
- One bridge structure removed
- Estimated Cost \$97M (2026)



View of the Initial Overpass from Eastbound Tropicana toward UNLV:



View of the Revised Shortened Overpass:





Views Traveling over the Overpass:



Views Traveling over the Overpass:



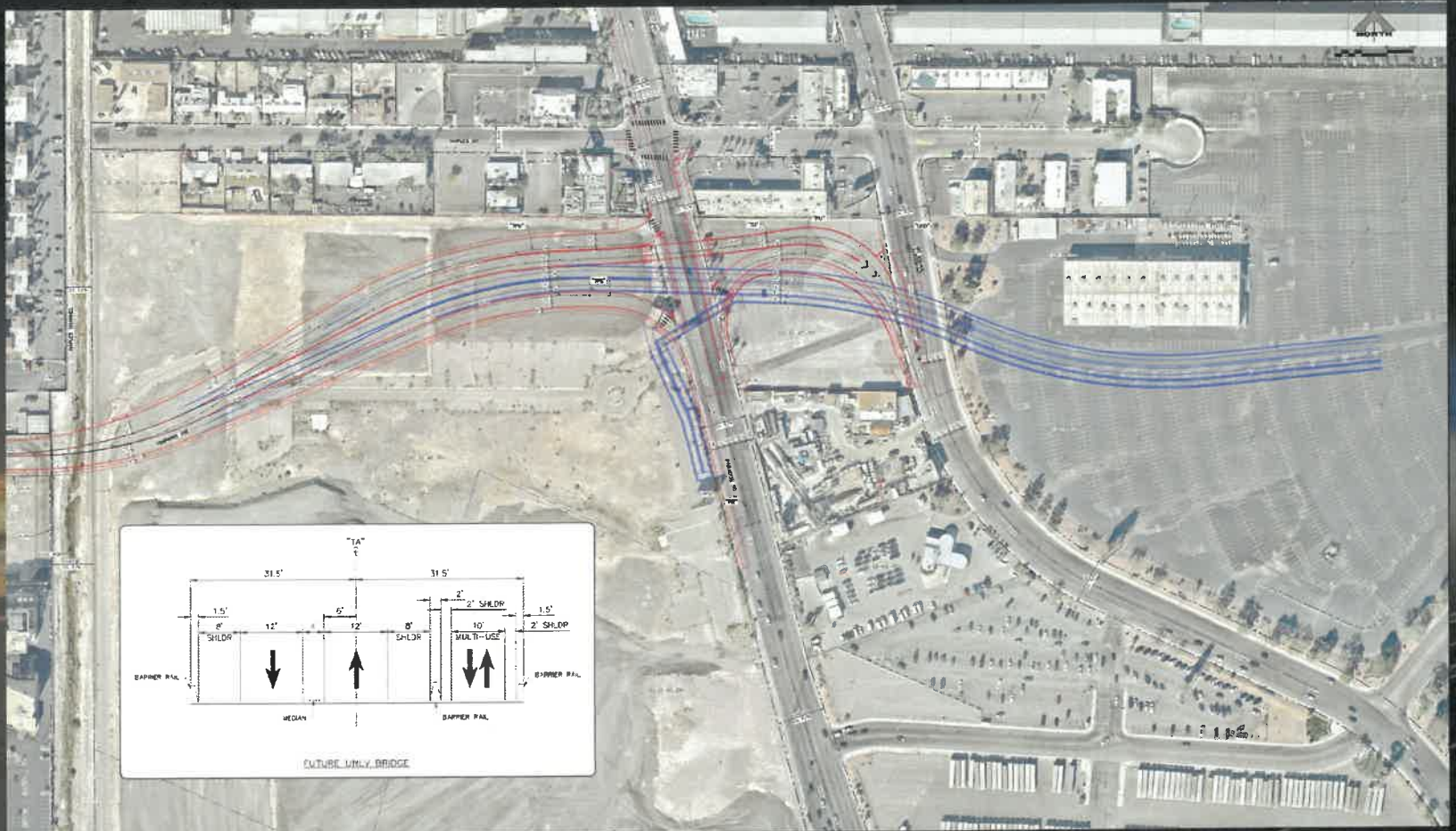
Views Traveling over the Overpass:



Comparison:

	Revised Overpass		Revised DDI	
Benefit/Cost Ratio	1.81	✓	1.19	
Construction Cost	\$97M	✓	\$210M	
Construction Duration	24 Months	✓	36+ Months	
Transit	No Change	✓	2 Stops Eliminated, 5 Stops Relocated	
Pedestrian Access + Crosswalks	No Change	✓	+5 Crosswalks	
Traffic Signals	No Change	✓	+1 Traffic Signal, +1 Ped Signal	
Number of Bridges	2	✓	4	
Impacted Billboards	Min Impact	✓	All Billboards	
Right of Way Impact	5 Acre (DOA)	✓	15 Acre (DOA & UNLV)	
Construction in Runway Protection Zone	Minor Roadway Improvements	✓	Bridge & Drilled shafts (up to 70' deep)	
Pump House	None	✓	Yes	
Impact to Thomas & Mack Parking Lot	None	✓	Loss of 400 Spots	
TNC Operations	-		-	
Visual Impacts	Above Grade		Below Grade	
Fulfillment of Purpose	Meets the purpose NB UCD free-flowing	✓	Does not fully meet the purpose NB UCD signalized x2	

Tompkins Avenue – Future UNLV Bridge:



Tompkins Alignment Extension into UNLV

Looking East:



Tompkins Alignment Extension into UNLV

Looking West:



Tompkins Alignment Extension into UNLV

Looking Northwest:

