

Cooper Street remodeling nears

Campus, city, state officials must agree

By Don Harrison
Staff Writer

Cooper Street, the one thoroughfare known to even the newest freshman because of its hazardous crosswalks, may be in for a face lift.

For the past 10 months, UTA administrators headed by Dudley Wetsel, vice president for business affairs, have been negotiating with the Texas Highway Department and the City of Arlington on ways to remedy the dangerous situation.

Wetsel said the school has agreed to put up \$1.5 million for new construction and the highway department has tentatively offered \$500,000, but Arlington officials are remaining quiet until the matter is brought before the city council.

Thus far the concerned parties have formulated three different plans. Two involve the depression of Cooper Street and the construction of three bridges of varying lengths across the top. The only difference in the two plans is one calls for a four-lane and the other a six-lane highway. The plans were initially acceptable to the city, but school officials main-

tain the bridges should be aesthetic as well as functional.

One UTA administrator described the proposed depression as resembling the "Grand Canyon," especially if the street was widened to six lanes.

A third plan, equally unpopular with the city, involves the re-routing of Cooper Street to the east — possibly as far as Pecan Street.

The "new Cooper Street" would begin at West Mitchell, south of the main campus, go east to Pecan and turn north to Abram. Wetsel said the proposal would mean buying up some residential property before construction could begin.

Wayne Sherrell, director of traffic and transportation for Arlington, said the city "could not possibly agree with this proposal.

"If we re-route it that far, those 25,000 cars that use Cooper daily will have to go elsewhere."

The proposal offers Arlington the option of cutting an additional street beginning midway up Pecan at West Second Street and angling northwest to Abram.

Sherrell said the cost of the new

street would be strictly the city's expense.

The city responded to this plan by offering a counter-measure. It too is a re-route but would not extend as far east as Pecan Street.

Sherrell said the city's plan would branch off from Cooper Street, go south of the campus near Linda Vista Avenue and curve to the east, passing much closer to the Health Center than the other plan.

Wetsel said this would cause the school to lose too much student and faculty parking space, already a problem on campus. Both re-routes would be six-lane thoroughfares.

Negotiations are at a standstill until Wetsel returns from a meeting with UT administrators in El Paso next week.

"At that time we should know what direction we will go," said Wetsel. "I want it to be understood that there are no hard feelings between the city and the school. We are attempting, through negotiation, to look at all sides of the proposals and come up with what we think would be an acceptable solution to everyone."

Sherrell said regardless of the proposal that is accepted the city could not move without the council first considering its position.



Shorthorn: Jim Mercer

CONTROVERSIAL CROSSWALK — Increased enrollment, coupled with existing city traffic problems, is forcing UTA administrators to take a long hard look at the Cooper Street crossing with regards to student safety. UTA's plan to reroute the street east of the campus conflicts

with the city's suggestion to depress it and utilize three foot bridges to tie the campus together. Despite differences, both sides agree something must be done — and soon. The hazards of Cooper Street are shown above.