

DOWNTOWN/UTEP DISTRICT

The Downtown/UTEP District is the most distinctly urban of the five districts, containing the highest density of attractions and amenities, and is also therefore the most complex. For simplicity, this district is described as two separate sub-districts in the following discussion. **UTEP** refers to the northern portion of the district and **Downtown** describes the southern half.

UTEP SUB-DISTRICT

CHARACTER

The UTEP section is characterized primarily by the University of Texas El Paso (UTEP), large industrial facilities, such as the power plant and waste water treatment facility, and rugged terrain along the Doniphan Road/Interstate 10 corridor. This area has a history of heavy industry exemplified by the railroads, the former ASARCO (originally formed as the American Smelting and Refining Company; now simply called ASARCO since its acquisition by a Mexican conglomerate) smelter property, and GCC (formerly CEMEX) cement plant. In contrast to these industrial sites, the main campus of UTEP is a highly urbanized area with a distinct campus identity and unique architectural building styles.



An aerial view shows the informal trail and road network near UTEP campus.





A potential on-street connection provides an opportunity for a future side path through UTEP campus.



In Downtown, the trail will be in the form of urban pedestrian pathways and on-street bicycle facilities.



The trail will have to navigate through underpasses.





POINTS OF INTEREST – UTEP



UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS EL PASO MAIN CAMPUS



UTEP's campus offers rich cultural resources including museums and galleries, the Chihuahuan Desert Botanical Garden and numerous music and theater performance spaces, as well as sports and recreational facilities. Don Haskins Center and Sun Bowl stadium serve as venues for both UTEP women's and men's intercollegiate athletic teams and major regional entertainment programming, ranging from traveling shows such as Cirque de Soleil to performing artists such as Elton John and the Rolling Stones.



FUTURE UTEP EXPANSION



Now owned by UTEP, the property formerly occupied by the ASARCO plant is being looked at for possible future student housing and other uses.



SMELTERTOWN AND SMELTERTOWN CEMETERY



Smelertown is the location of a small community that was developed by and for workers at the ASARCO smelter. The town was dismantled and residents relocated elsewhere in the 1970s, when the effects of exposure to lead and other pollutants from the smelter began to be understood. After the eventual closing of the plant in 1999 and demolition of the smokestacks in 2013, the most visible reminder of that past is the cemetery.



OLD FORT BLISS/HART'S MILL

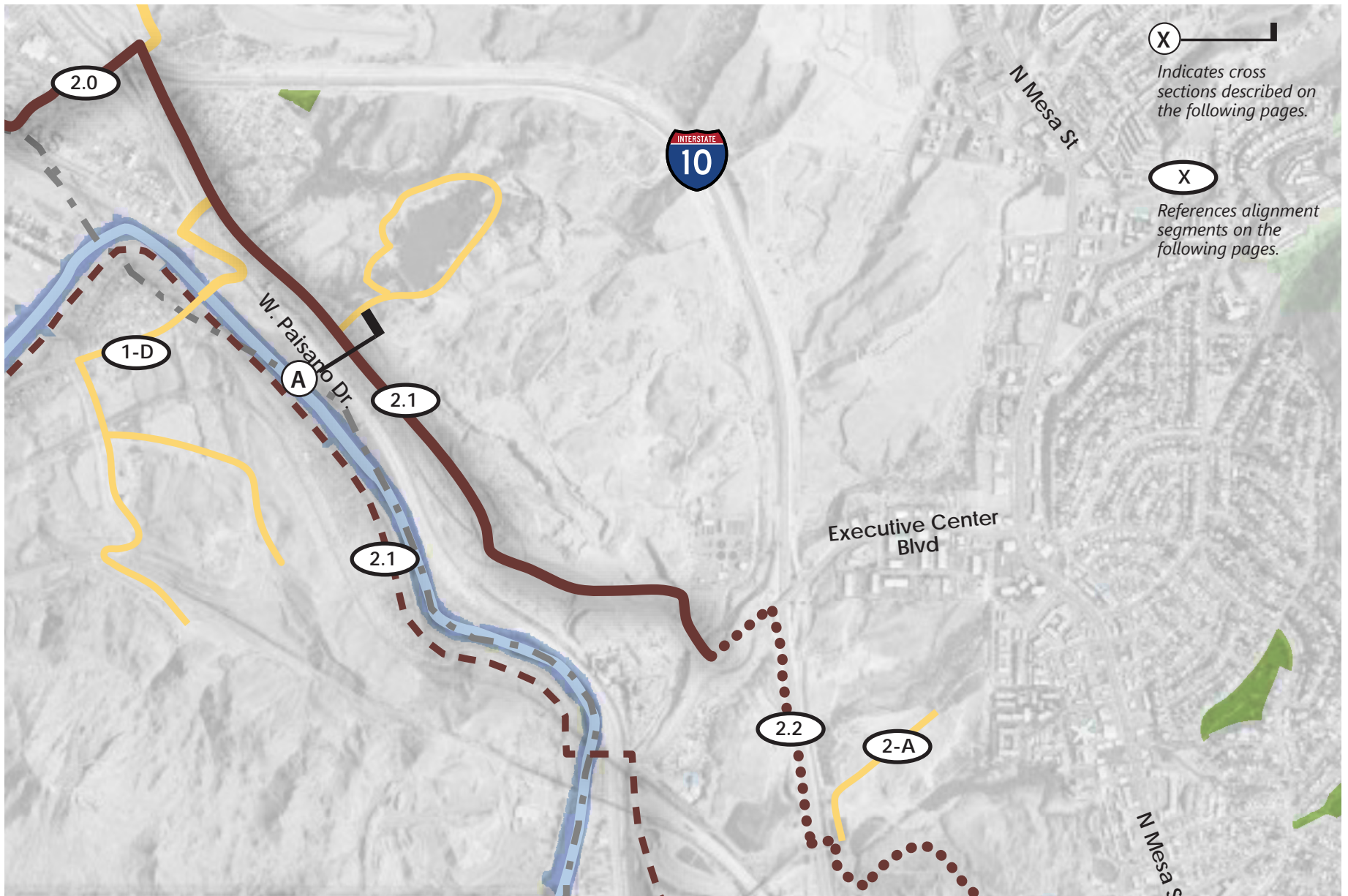


One of the most significant historic sites in the Southwest, this property encompasses the location of Oñate's original "Paso del Norte" crossing of the Rio Grande. The site was used prior to that time by the natives that traveled north and south along the Chihuahua trade route. It also includes Simeon Hart's grist mill, erected in 1849, which was the first industrial operation in El Paso, and historic Fort Bliss, where Buffalo Soldiers were stationed from 1866-1901. The adobe buildings at Old Fort Bliss are replicas of the original fort and serve as the center for a history program.



PASO DEL NORTE TRAIL

See Map 18 for overall region alignments and legend.



MAP 19. UTEP SUB-DISTRICT KEY MAP 1

TRAIL CONNECTIVITY

Through this reach the trail will meander along and under many of the Interstate 10, US Route 85, and Executive Center Boulevard overpasses as it makes its way towards the University area. Much of the terrain west of the University is rugged, undeveloped, and relatively steep.

PRIMARY ALIGNMENTS

2.0 **Doniphan/Arroyo Alignment (Proposed Shared-Use Trail) TxDOT Shared-Use Path Extension at CEMEX Property along Paisano (Funded)**

TxDOT has planned (and is currently constructing) an asphalt shared-use trail that will run underneath the new ramps being constructed for the intersection of West Paisano and Interstate 10. The trail will turn south and run parallel to West Paisano through the old CEMEX property (which will become a Boy Scout Camp) to the point where it intersects with Executive Center Blvd.

2.2 **Executive Center to UTEP Segment (Proposed Shared-Use Trail)**

Starting at Executive Center Boulevard, the proposed alignment turns northeast toward Interstate 10, and then south along the west side of Interstate 10 passing the Smeltertown cemetery, until it intersects with the existing 'Ore Bridge,' where it will cross the Interstate. East of Interstate 10 the trail begins to climb up a steep grade through the undeveloped property on the west side of the UTEP campus, following existing informal dirt roads up past the soccer fields at Charlie Davis Park and the Student Rec Center to Sun Bowl Drive. A possible constraint with this segment is the unknown future of the existing 'Ore Bridge'. To accomplish this alignment, a bridge crossing of Interstate 10 is critical. If the existing bridge cannot be used for any reason, there is an opportunity (albeit a much more costly one)

for an iconic new pedestrian bridge to span the freeway to make this connection—perhaps picking up on the theme established by UTEP's new steel "miner's pick" sculptures that bracket the roadway, for example. Similarly, if the current bridge can be used for the trail, there is opportunity to improve its aesthetics to enhance the visual identity of El Paso and showcase the PDN Trail.

2.3 **Sun Bowl Drive – Student Rec Center to Schuster Avenue Segment (Existing/Proposed On-Street)**

The proposed alignment follows Sun Bowl Drive from the recreation complex past the basketball and football stadiums, through several roundabouts, to West Schuster Avenue. From the Student Rec Center driveway to University Avenue the urban trail would utilize existing shared lane roadways (marked with "sharrows" to denote bikes share the road) and generally wide sidewalks. From University Drive to Schuster Avenue, the sharrows disappear, but the sidewalks continue. With some effort, this segment could be converted to a protected two-way cycletrack or sidepath.

2.4 **Schuster Avenue – Sun Bowl to Prospect Street Segment (Proposed/ Existing On-Street)**

Turning left on Schuster Avenue, the alignment passes through yet another roundabout before turning right on Prospect Street. Although Schuster Avenue is not striped for bike lanes, its overall pavement width is such that it could be restriped to accommodate them, or at a minimum sharrows could be added to indicate a shared-use facility. Of particular interest in this reach, the wide sidewalks along Schuster Avenue do not follow the roadway through the aforementioned roundabout; instead they drop down and go beneath the roundabout through a three-way connection that also links to two parking lots and a meandering stairway that rises up to the main campus.

2.5 **Prospect Street – Schuster Avenue to Interstate 10 (Existing On-Street)**

Prospect Street passes through the Sunset Heights neighborhood—an established residential area, with on-street parking, decent sidewalks, and continuous striped bike lanes—before crossing into the Downtown area. The urban trail alignment would follow the existing facilities along Prospect to another crossing of Interstate 10, where the trail passes into the Downtown sub-district.

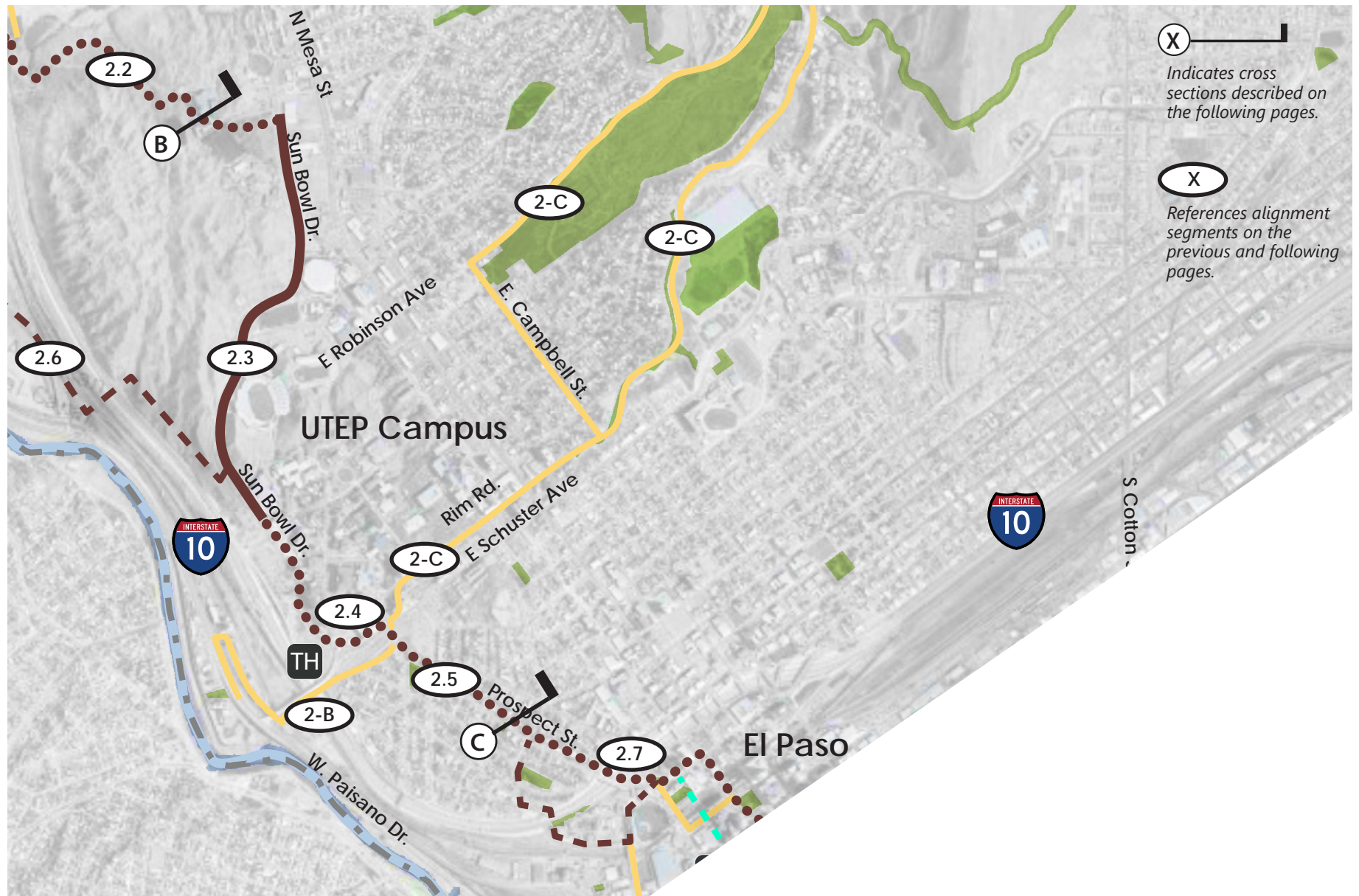
LOOP ALIGNMENTS

2.6 **Brickland Road Loop (Proposed)**

Diverging from the primary trail at Racetrack Drive, this loop crosses south over Rio Grande on the Racetrack Drive bridge and then heads east along the river's edge, crossing Anapra Road, and continuing south along Brickland Road along the river's edge. The alignment would cross under one or both of the elevated railroad trestles, and then cross east over the Rio Grande to Paisano Drive. Two options have been considered for this river crossing. Initial thoughts were that it could cross via an existing bridge known as the 'Brick Bridge' just south of the second railroad bridge; however, that bridge was recently reconstructed for use by the Border Patrol, and the new bridge did not make any accommodations for joint trail use. If shared use is not an option for that bridge, the other alternative would be to build a new river crossing between the two railroad trestles aligned with Executive Center Boulevard. This crossing location would better facilitate the use of the signalized intersection at Executive Center Boulevard and Paisano Drive, as well as the railroad tracks that run parallel to Paisano Drive. After crossing the railroad tracks, the trail would run south through the former ASARCO property (recently acquired by UTEP) and ultimately cross Interstate 10 to tie back into the primary alignment on Sun Bowl Drive.



See Map 18 for overall region alignments and legend.



MAP 20. UTEP SUB-DISTRICT KEY MAP 2

Depending on UTEP's eventual redevelopment plans for this area, several options may exist for the Interstate 10 crossing.

- **Option 1:** The first and simplest would be to stay to the north of the railroad tracks and continue along them to the southeast, rejoining the primary alignment at the 'Ore Bridge' Interstate 10 crossing discussed above.
- **Option 2:** Since two sets of railroad tracks bisect the property, it is likely that the redevelopment will ultimately include at least one grade-separated crossing of those tracks. If and when that occurs, a joint-use facility could be constructed that includes adequate width for a trail facility. From the east side of the tracks the trail could connect to the 'Ore Bridge' or a new crossing.
- **Option 3:** The trail would continue south along the west edge of the UTEP/ASARCO property, staying closer to the river as far as possible, before crossing the both Interstate 10 and the railroad tracks. This crossing is only feasible with the construction of a new (and lengthy) bridge—which would be another opportunity for an "iconic" statement.

A potential constraint to implementation of this loop is the American Eagle Brick Company property. As private property, it would require acquisition of an easement or right-of-way for the trail. While it would seem that keeping the trail close to the river might avoid that issue, even the IBWC—the agency controls the river and floodplain—seems unclear on who has the final say in this case. The uncertainty surrounding this issue influenced the recommendation to keep the primary alignment described above on the east side of the river.

SPUR TRAILS

2-A Future UTEP Student Housing Spur (Proposed Shared-Use Trail)

Just after crossing over the existing 'Ore Bridge' to the east side of Interstate 10, this spur could connect north and east into the future student housing area (proposed by UTEP), the Mission Hills and Montecillo neighborhoods, and businesses along Executive Center Boulevard. This connection from the primary alignment should be considered in any planning efforts of this development as it can serve as an asset for connecting the UTEP campus and greater PDN Trail network.

2-B Hart's Mill/Old Fort Bliss Spur (Proposed Shared-Use/On-Street)

This spur connects from the roundabout at Schuster Avenue via the Spur 1966 overpass west across Interstate 10 and the railroad tracks to Paisano Drive and into the Hart's Mill/Old Fort Bliss property. Although there is an existing shared-use sidepath that extends from Paisano Drive to the east side of the freeway, that path ends at a switchback ramp leading down to a UTEP parking area, leaving no option for connecting to the on-street alignment at Schuster Avenue. In order to make that connection, the shared-use path will need to be extended along the Spur 1966 roadway, or create an alternate route via Heisig Avenue to connect with the primary alignment at Prospect Street. This option would require minimal construction, since the first switchback landing on the ramp down to the parking area actually is almost level with and very close to Heisig Avenue. Construction of a short ramp from that landing east to Heisig Avenue would facilitate this connection at a much lower cost than extending a cantilevered path along Spur 1966.

2.6 Arroyo Park Spur (Proposed On-Street)

From the intersection of Schuster Avenue and Prospect Street, this spur jogs around the UTEP campus, connects to two hospitals (Providence and Las Palmas), connects to Rim Road, and follows this road east into the adjacent Rim-University and Kern Place neighborhoods to connect with park facilities at Tom Lea Upper Park and Billy Rogers Arroyo Park, as well as Scenic Drive at the south end of the Franklin Mountains. The loop is formed by continuing around the east end of Billy Rogers Arroyo Park and heading west again on East Robinson Avenue, before reconnecting to Rim Road via North Campbell Street. This loop offers attractive views of the city and foothills landscape.

TRAILHEADS AND PUBLIC TRANSIT

UTEP Campus Trailhead at Prospect Street/Sun Bowl Drive (Proposed)

A potential trailhead at this location could utilize existing parking at UTEP for PDN Trail access. Unless special provisions are made, use of this trailhead would be limited to those who possess a valid UTEP parking permit.

Bus Stops

Several City of El Paso bus stops are located within a block of the Sun Bowl alignment along North Mesa Street on the UTEP campus. Additional stops are located along Prospect at Schuster and Los Angeles Drive.

Glory Road Transfer Center

A Sun Metro bus transfer center is located approximately 0.3 miles east of Sun Bowl Drive along Glory Road, which runs between the football stadium and basketball arena. This facility offers connections to several local bus routes.



NEARBY SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS

Schools in walking distance include:

- University of Texas El Paso
- El Paso Community College – Rio Grande Campus
- El Paso Conservatory of Music
- Vilas Elementary School

TPOLOGIES – UTEP

Shared-Use Path: A ten- to twelve-foot wide paved trail can accommodate multiple uses comfortably. Wide shoulders or a parallel unpaved trail can provide an alternative for trail users who prefer a softer surface.

Shared-Use Path at Underpass: In some cases, the trail will need to fit beneath highway overpasses between the roadway and bridge piers or abutments. Where adequate room exists, the tight spaces between the trail and the highway can be softened with a landscape buffer, and swales alongside the trail can capture runoff from the trail and/or roadway to sustain plantings. Where sufficient room for plantings is not available, the trail should be separated from the roadway by a curb or safety barricade of some sort (guardrail, post-and-cable, etc.).

Typical cross sections indicated by letters on previous maps.

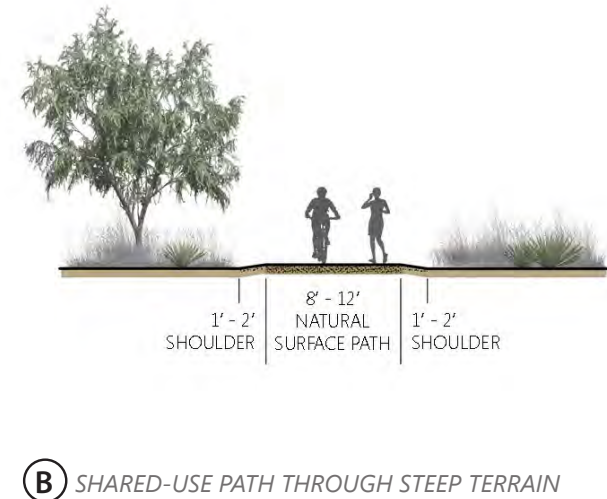
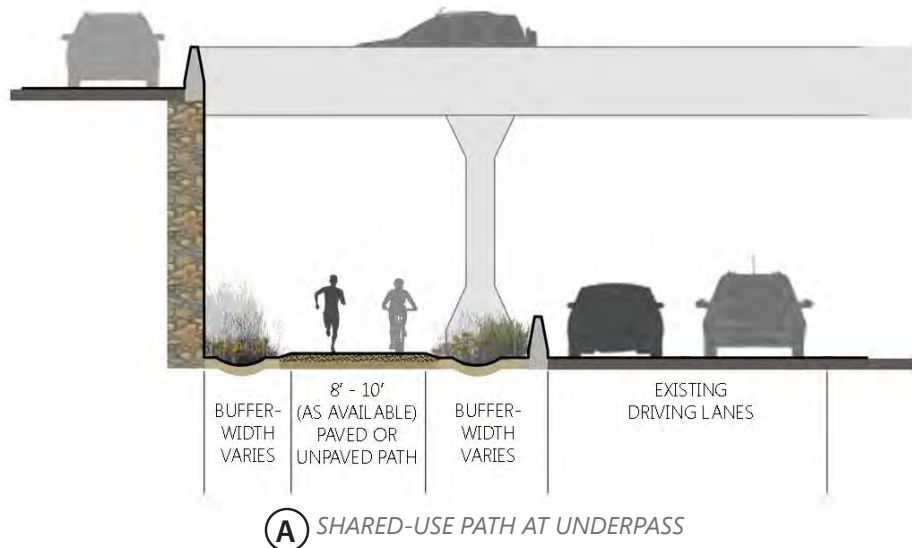


FIGURE 14. TYPICAL CROSS SECTIONS A & B – UTEP



Shared-Use Path through Steep Terrain: In areas near UTEP where the alignment will traverse steep and exposed hillsides, retaining walls and railings may be required to maintain grades under five percent. Periodic shade nodes with seating should be provided to allow trail users chance to rest and get a reprieve from the intense sun.

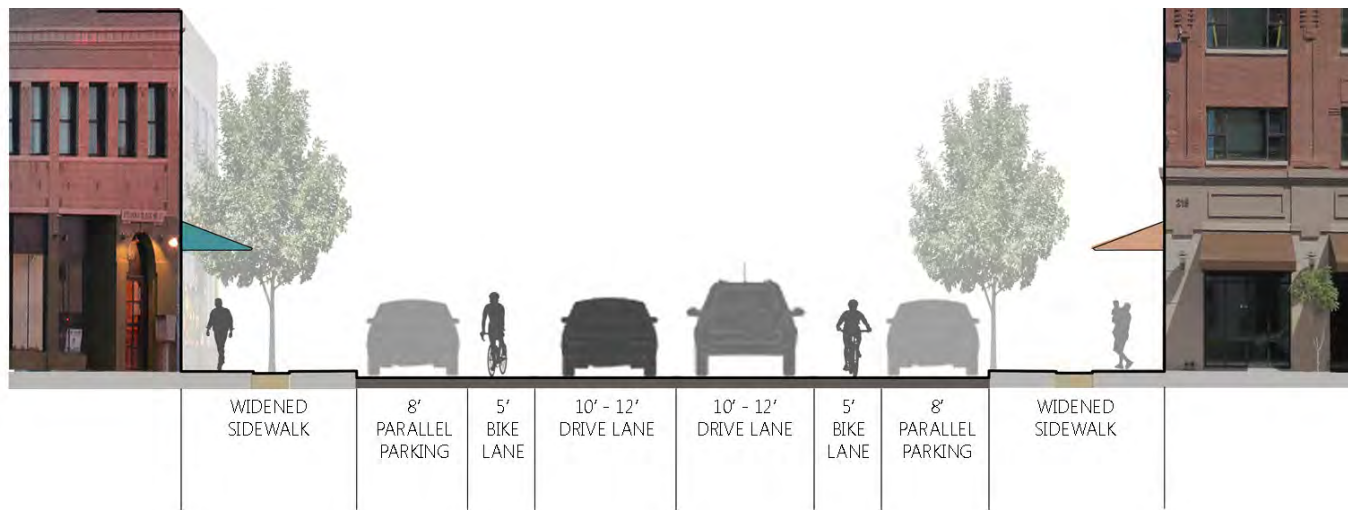
On-Street Bike Lanes with Sidewalks: Through the UTEP campus, existing conditions dictate that on-street facilities are utilized, at least in the short term. Currently part of the Sun Bowl alignment is marked for shared lanes intended to accommodate both cars and bicycles. This is a minimum level of designation; however, striped

lanes would be preferable for the entire reach. The route also includes fairly wide sidewalks through campus, so in the future it may be possible, with some utility relocations and minor right-of-way adjustments, to convert sidewalks on one or both sides of the road to shared-use side paths, changing this to an off-street segment.

South of UTEP, bike lanes and sidewalks already exist along Prospect Street, so all that would be required between Schuster and Interstate 10 is the addition of wayfinding signage.



Typical on-street bike lanes.



© ON-STREET BIKE LANES WITH SIDEWALKS

FIGURE 15. TYPICAL CROSS SECTION C – DOWNTOWN/UTEP



TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS – UTEP



There are many opportunities to utilize and improve underpasses for trails in this reach.



There are opportunities for single-track connector trails from UTEP to Billy Rogers Arroyo Open Space and Franklin Mountains.





The UTEP sub-district could use an iconic bridge. Some examples are shown.



"Share the road" markings called "sharrows" may be used on Downtown streets.



Co-located bike-share stations can attract new users.

