



Transportation Advisory Committee Minutes

Thursday, December 1, 2011

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

San Tan Room – Municipal Services Building

Committee Members:

Ryan Nichols – Chair	Present
Chris Clark - Vice Chair	Present
John Alston – Council Member	Absent
Gregory Arrington	Present
Kim Mlazgar	Present
Nichelle Williams	Present
Patricia Conrad	Absent
Richard Turman	Present
Tom Nelson	Present
Steve Conklin	Present

Public:

Ted Quist	Queen Creek Resident
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Town Staff Members:

Bill Birdwell, Sr. Traffic Engineering Analyst	Absent
Chris Dovel, Town Engineer	Present
Laura Catanese, Sr. Administrative Assistant	Present
Tom Condit, Development Services Director	Present

1. Call to Order:

Committee Chairman, Ryan Nichols, called the meeting to order at 6:37PM.

2. Introductions:

Chair Nichols introduced member Tom Nelson to the committee. Tom Nelson has completed the Town's Citizen Leadership program and has joined the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) to be more involved in local government. Chair Nichols then had members give self introductions for Mr. Nelson's benefit.

3. Public Comment:

Mr. Ted Quist; a resident of the Town attended the meeting for observational purposes (for his own knowledge).

4. Items for Discussion and possible action

Item A: Consideration and possible approval of October 6, 2011 minutes

Richard Turman made the first motion to approve the minutes. Vice Chair Clark seconded the motion. **Motion was approved UNANIMOUSLY.**

The Final ULI Advisory Services Panel Report was received a few days ago. Tonight's presentation is a summary of the major transportation-related issues identified in the report, many of which match very closely with the Town's General Plan, Master Plans and related documents. There are a few differences, however. The summary identified the following transportation strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.

TRANSPORTATION STRENGTHS

- Despite absorbing rapid growth in the last decade, Queen Creek's transportation system has strengths, including: reserve traffic capacity; trail system; attractive streetscape; rail presence; through traffic.

TRANSPORTATION STRENGTHS

- The Town's section-line network of arterials creates some weaknesses, including: limited continuity; barriers to walkability; at-grade railroad crossings; and lack of a freeway.

TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS (Opportunities)

- Consider re-prioritization of the CIP to focus on projects that enhance the Town's identity, support job creation and promote the Town Center.
- Connection of the trail system to San Tan Mountain Regional Park (2016 goal).
- Create distinctive intersections to serve as gateways at locations that have not yet been built out (one example: roundabout at Rittenhouse / Hawes).
- Continue advocating for freeway extensions (SR-24 and N-S Freeway).
- Prepare for freeway access on SR-24 at Ellsworth Road between Germann and Queen Creek Road. (Widening, wayfinding and welcome signage; landscaping; and a significantly improved approach to the Town Center).
- Provide a grade-separated rail crossing at Power/Pecos to eliminate traffic delay and improve access to Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport. Grade separation at other arterials (Germann and Sossaman) depending on financial resources.
- Encourage vanpools or similar schemes for commutes to regional employers with more than 100 employees (Chandler/Mesa/Tempe/Phoenix).
- **Town Center:** Ellsworth Road north of Ocotillo should emulate that south of Ocotillo. An undivided, two-lane street with parallel parking would best support a pedestrian-scaled commercial and civic district.
- **Town Center:** Orient new pedestrian-scaled buildings to the street (especially Ellsworth Road).
- **Town Center:** Use streets to create smaller blocks more typical of a downtown.
- **Town Center:** Consider on-street parking as one means of meeting parking needs.
- **Town Center:** Reconsider zoning requirements such as: no setback requirements, and revise / reduce parking requirements
- **Town Center:** Plan for and encourage opportunities for commuter and intercity rail along the UPRR corridor.

Questions/Comments from members:

Question: Were any of the ULI panelists from a small town? Those that have not lived in small, rural areas have a different perspective to offer.

Answer: The ULI panelists were a mixed group and have lived in a variety of settings, including small towns. However, most (if not all) panelists now live in larger metropolitan areas.

Question: The ULI report does not support the widening of (old) Ellsworth north of Victoria. The Town may need to re-evaluate current plans for (old) Ellsworth Road, particularly the design north of Victoria.

Answer: Narrowing the streets through Town Center would allow for more parking; many cities/towns have revised their town centers and have taken out lanes to allow for more parking. With the ULI recommendation to revert to one lane in each direction, we will bring back this particular issue through the TAC and should you have a recommendation to provide to Council, staff will do so.

Question: Would it be possible to “swap out” the plans for at-grade versus grade separated at Power/Pecos and Germann/Sossaman? It might make more sense to have the grade separated crossing at Power and Pecos, given traffic volumes. This would probably add cost – as the “at-grade” improvements at Power / Pecos have already been completed.

Answer: Staff will bring up this idea with the Consultants and the Corridor Study will provide an opportunity to discuss this with our local partners (Gilbert, Mesa, Maricopa County).

Item C: Discussion and possible action on ADOT Freeway Corridor Alignments Tom Condit

Presentation of the SR-24 (formerly SR 802) and N-S Freeway alignment options near Queen Creek. Staff recommendations include:

- **Support Pinal County RSRSM Alignments**
 - Focus early efforts and primary emphasis on extending SR-24 eastward (SR-24 becomes the link between the N-S Freeway and the other Phoenix metro freeways)
 - Connection between N-S Freeway and SR-24 supersedes the need for early construction of a north-south connection between the N-S Freeway and US-60
 - Regional arterial roadway network would initially carry traffic between SR-24 and US-60
 - Future freeway phase would connect US-60 to N-S Freeway at the future US-60 bypass (1 mile east of Goldfield Road)
- **Benefits of supporting Pinal County RSRSM alignments include:**
 - All agency funding and construction efforts focus on bringing SR-24 east, rather than competing for funding with a far eastern connection with US-60.
 - Swinging SR-24 to the south (west of the CAP canal; Ironwood to Ocotillo) provides the maximum opportunity for current residents to have early access to a freeway.
 - Far eastern freeway extension to be considered as a “Phase 2” project, with construction at such time when significant development of Superstition Vistas project is occurring.

Discussion:

The City of Apache Junction is not in favor of an access point off Ironwood Road because there is a development in the way and there are some earth fissure concerns as well. The Town is not as concerned with the ultimate connection at the US-60, as long as emphasis is placed on the initial connection being SR-24 to the Phoenix Metro area. There is an upcoming ADOT workshop on the N-S Freeway Corridor alignments on December 12, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., at Walker Butte Elementary School Cafeteria. Upon direction from TAC, staff will update the Town Council at their December 7 meeting and provide the TAC recommendations. A comment form will be finalized to send to ADOT once staff receives input and direction from Town Council.

Questions/Comments from members:

Question: Can the freeway connect to SR-79?

Answer: SR-79 is a valuable arterial and will eventually connect with SR-24 (either at Florence Junction or a few miles north on US-60).

Question: What budget issues are associated with creating a freeway access point on Ironwood?

Answer: Existing development rights near US-60, as well as earth fissure considerations.

Question: When will construction begin on Germann Road from Meridian to Ironwood?

Answer: Construction is due to begin in 2014.

ACTION:

Motion to approve the staff recommendation was made by Vice Chair Clark, providing clarifying language emphasizing the primary importance of a N-S freeway connection to SR 24 and that language of a connection from the N-S freeway to the US-60 be revised, as follows:

- *Connection between N-S Freeway and SR-24 supersedes the need for early construction of a north-south connection between the N-S Freeway ~~SR-24~~ and US-60*

Motion was approved UNANIMOUSLY.

Item D. Update on Regional Transportation Projects

Tom Condit

Staff gave a Regional Transportation Projects update on the following projects:

Power Road Improvements: Pecos Road to San Tan Freeway

Mesa Council has approved the improvements and will share the cost with other agencies (no Queen Creek participation) through an IGA. Phase 1 of the project will last through March 2012 and the canal dry-up. There will be many delays/restrictions until construction is finalized in October 2013.

PARA Grant - Germann Road (Power to Ironwood)

A brief overview of the project and schedule was provided. Additional meetings with the TAC (consultant to provide update) will be in the spring, 2012.

Meridian Road Design Concept Report:

MCDOT has revisited this report and included a new alternative. Mr. Schnepf of Schnepf Farms has been involved recently with MCDOT in the design plans - as the latest plan shows realigned Riggs Road going through his property (realignment of Riggs to the north).

Hunt Highway – Empire to Thompson:

This is a multi-million dollar project that will extend the widening done by the Town and MCDOT to the south and east. Plans are for a 4-lane roadway plus left-turn lane, widening Hunt Highway between Empire and Thompson Road, plus ROW acquisition and substantial drainage improvements. Plans are at 100% design; ADOT approval pending.

Riggs Road Project:

There is an open house for this project scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 13, 5 p.m. – 7 p.m., in the Founders' room (Town of Queen Creek).

Inter-City Rail Corridors:

This project remains a priority and with the Council's Corporate Strategic Plan identifying this as a goal, staff will continue to pursue any and all opportunities to improve our opportunities for this regional transportation amenity. This project closely ties with MAG's 2010 Commuter Rail Study and the ongoing Sustainable Transportation and Land Use Study underway by MAG.

CAAG – RTP

CAAG has hired a new Transportation Director, Mark Griffin, whose first priority is to get a consultant under contract and begin work on the multi-year CAAG Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

Item E. Request for future agenda items

Chair Nichols

1. Discussion on the Design Concept Report for Town Center, including design plans for old Ellsworth Road between Ocotillo and Rittenhouse, including related traffic studies for the previous Vestar Phase II development.
2. Update on the Germann Road Corridor Study.


5. Announcements

No announcements were given.

6. Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 8:12 p. m.

PREPARED BY: Laura Catanese
PASSED AND APPROVED ON: _____



Ryan Nichols, TAC Committee Chair