



Transportation Advisory Committee Minutes

Thursday, October 11, 2012, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
San Tan Conference Room – Municipal Services Building

Committee Members:

Ryan Nichols – Chairman	Present
Chris Clark – Vice-Chairman	Present
David Bond	Present
Gregory Arrington	Present
Steve Conklin	Absent
Nichelle Williams	Present
Richard Turman	Present
Robin Benning, Vice-Mayor	Present
Kenn Burnell	Absent
Alan Turley	Present

Public:

Andrew Smigielski, PE, PTOE, PTP	Southwest Traffic Engineering
Chris Williams, PE, PTOE	Southwest Traffic Engineering

Town Staff Members:

Troy White, Public Works Division Manager	Present
Laura Moats, Development Services Assistant	Present
Bill Birdwell, Traffic Engineer	Present
Wendy Kaserman, Assistant to Town Manager	Present

1. Call to Order:

Chairman Nichols called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

2. Introductions:

Members and guests introduced themselves.

3. Public Comment: None.

4. Items for Discussion and possible action

Item A: Consideration and possible approval of Sept. 6, 2012 minutes Chairman Nichols

Chris Clark made a motion to approve the September 6, 2012 minutes, as presented. Nichelle Williams seconded the motion. Motion carried **unanimously 8-0.**

Item B: Transit Planning Study Scope of Work Wendy Kaserman

Assistant to the Town Manager Wendy Kaserman stated the draft Scope of Work (SOW) for the Transit Planning Study was provided in the agenda packet. She specifically asked the TAC to

provide comments and/or suggestions on the SOW, stating staff plans on putting this item on the Council's agenda in December, which is the earliest it can get to the Valley Metro Board. She provided background information, explaining the data collection and analysis and the resulting recommendation. She noted a big piece of data collection will be a public and agency involvement plan, which will include a resident survey. Up to this point, there has not been background work on where residents are traveling to. Ms. Kaserman noted this information will be relevant to the Economic Development Department, as well. Therefore, this will have much broader ramifications than just how it will be used in the Transit Study. During the Data and Analysis stage, Staff will also be looking at prior and ongoing studies, including a broader review of the previously conducted Small Area Transportation Study, and the Pinal County Transit Feasibility Study recently conducted in order to look at the potential for future connectivity. In addition to reviewing these studies, staff will also look at current and future conditions within the Town. These will comprise the data gathering and analysis phase. From that there will be preliminary service options which are geared towards some type of bus option, and eventually some transit recommendations. Town staff has added a component for future transit opportunities. ADOT is currently conducting a passenger rail study, for which the Town participated in the stakeholder process. The Town would like to see some recommendations as to how it can position itself should these opportunities arise in the future. The concluding element will be some implementation strategies, and an action plan. But there is nothing in the current Fiscal Year Budget or the Five-Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Budget on the Capital side or the operating side. In 2007, there was a pilot express bus route from Queen Creek to Tempe, which lasted six months and was cancelled due to low ridership. Going forward, there will be much greater planning before implementing routes; therefore, the bus route should be more successful since we will have a better idea where people are going. Ms. Kaserman requested recommendations on the study and Scope of Work.

Vice-Chairman Clark asked if this will incorporate where people are going for shopping or entertainment opportunities. Ms. Kaserman answered the study will not just include work; it will be broader. She stated she will come back to the TAC with a status update, at which time the TAC will be able to see a copy of the survey questions. Chairman Nichols asked if this was Local Transportation Area Fund (LTAF) funded. Ms. Kaserman responded it is 100 per cent LTAF funded, and uses previous unspent LTAF funds that can be added to the new LTAF funds. In response to some further questions by Chairman Nichols, Ms. Kaserman stated Valley Metro will head up the study; it is anticipated they will be able to do some work in-house but they will also contract out some of the work. As part of the public agency partnership, Town staff will also be involved in the process, contributing some of their expertise. It will come back to TAC at various points throughout the study. The timing of the project will be approximately 18 months: December, 2012 through May, 2014. Chairman Nichols questioned the need for transit at this time. Public Works Manager Troy White responded the Town is being more proactive in planning for the future, i.e. looking at future development and trends on where people are commuting and for what purpose. This study can guide the Town into what it will need 5-10 years from now, and as the population grows. Ms. Kaserman added the Town needs to demonstrate that it is taking steps to in making a commitment towards transit. Alan Turley commented he is not aware of any municipalities or government agencies which operate transit systems without being subsidized. He noted Queen Creek would have to weigh what kind of expenditures it can take on and maintain in the future. Mr. White asked if funding opportunities have been identified. Ms. Kaserman responded part of the SOW is to identify funding opportunities. Prop 400 monies contribute a half cent sales tax to transportation, and some cities have transit funded within that plan. When Prop 400 expires, and when and if there is a Prop 500, this transit study could help the Town acquire regional funding for transit. A lot of this is positioning us for future opportunities. Vice-Mayor Benning reminded the group, the Town does not pay for the roads, and does not come close to paying its share of what it takes to build roads, buses, and trains. He hopes that at the least, maybe something like a Dial-A-Ride program will come out of this. There will still be many people in the community who will need services like this.

Chairman Nichols asked staff what action needs to be taken tonight. Mr. White asked for a recommendation to approve the Scope of Work, if there is nothing TAC wishes to add or amend.

Vice-Chairman Clark made a motion to accept the Transit Planning Study Scope of Work, as presented. Member Williams seconded. All ayes. Motion carried 8-0.

Item C. Presentation and Discussion on SATS Southwest Traffic Engineering

Andrew Smigielski and Chris Williams of Southwest Traffic Engineering were in attendance to present the results of the Small Area Transportation Study (SATS) for Town Center. Mr. Williams reminded TAC that SWTE had been at the TAC meeting two months ago (June 7, 2012) to discuss the implementation of this study. He distributed the analysis, noting the first step was to obtain numbers using the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) traffic model, which stretches into Pinal County. The MAG model is very broad, but is used in trying to predict traffic information for a much smaller area (Queen Creek Town Center). This model includes some inaccuracies in that it predicts 14,500 trips on Ellsworth Road north of Rittenhouse Road, and shows this as a one-lane road at 45 mph without any stopping. The first page of the traffic study shows the MAG street network in grey, with each Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ) having numbers associated for how many homes, commercial buildings and employees are in each TAZ. Downtown Queen Creek is not represented accurately by any of the TAZs. Future developments (such as Queen Creek Station and other downtown developments) are not represented. SWTE took the model data and stated it does not accurately reflect what downtown Queen Creek will look like in 2032. They created their own model. Mr. Williams illustrated the level of detail SWTE took in their model to show there is now way to predict how much traffic is on Maya Road using a regional model, such as the MAG model. SWTE did their own trip generation for the downtown area (Town Center plan). The trip generation SWTE came up with for downtown was a lot higher than what was shown on the MAG assumption. SWTE confirmed the collector street system on Figure 11 (orange roads) would all operate adequately as collector streets with one-lane in each direction and two-way left-turn lanes. A key goal and actual result of the study was that if Ellsworth Road north of Rittenhouse is built as a two-lane road (one lane in each direction), with the existing traffic-calming and no right-turn on red (slowing down traffic) the collector street network will operate adequately in 2032. Mr. Williams noted some of the recommendations made by SWTE:

- A future signal will be needed at Ocotillo/Heritage Loop roads.
- Some timing changes for Ellsworth Loop and Rittenhouse roads are suggested, particularly an overlap phase, with the west-bound right turns on Rittenhouse Road in the mornings, since a lot of commuters are coming either from the south side of town or from Pinal County to the freeway. Mr. Williams explained an “overlap phase” means there can be a right turn on green arrow at the same time as southbound dual lefts are going on Ellsworth Loop Road.

Mr. Williams noted with long-range modeling, as routes open up in Queen Creek (future Meridian and Signal Butte roads up to freeway and Riggs Road), each route will have an impact in terms of less traffic on Rittenhouse Road. In summary, the SWTE traffic model does a good job of estimating the collector street system and using the MAG model for arterial streets (4 lanes and above) to come up with a findings for what the Town will need in terms of future downtown traffic and streets needed. Mr. Williams noted it was also discussed that if the Town decides to build Ellsworth north of Rittenhouse Road as a four-lane road without impeding drivers, then people will use it as a cut-through. If the Town decides to have one lane in each direction and a combination of a stop sign or on-street parking, there are options (such as roundabouts which will slow drivers down) for moving traffic to Ellsworth Loop Road for freeway access.

Questions: Alan Turley asked for clarification on the areas proposing to be two-lane through 2032. Mr. Williams clarified using the colored map, stating everything in orange would have one lane in each direction, with the ability for a two-way left turn lane. Everything in Green is six-lane arterial; everything in blue is four-lane arterial. Mr. Williams noted these are all in line with Town's General Plan and the long-term street network associated with the General Plan.

Mr. Turley stated he feels any two-lane road is shorts-sided that far into the future, since Queen Creek has gone through periods when it is almost impossible to get through Town during peak hours. He has heard the County point-of-view, which was consistently that Queen Creek needs lanes, not necessarily lights. Vice-Mayor Benning asked for clarification on specifically which portion of Ellsworth Loop/Ellsworth Road SWTE is referring. Mr. Williams responded he is referring to the portion of Ellsworth Road directly north of Rittenhouse Road, as a cut-through directly to miss the intersection of Ellsworth Loop and Rittenhouse roads. Vice-Mayor Benning said the concern from the neighborhoods has been not to open the shortcut and facilitate shortcuts by adding lanes. Mr. White talked about Levels of Service (LOS) B, C, and D. Chairman Nichols clarified what LOS B, C, D means: A being the quickest, least congested (no stopping – no delays). A-D in urban areas is good/acceptable. Es and Fs are unacceptable and indicate traffic congestion. Mr. Williams responded waiting at an intersection for more than one cycle would mean LOS E or F.

Chairman Nichols stated Alan's concern if the Town is already maxing out roads, or operating at LOS B, C. is Queen Creek pushing the max, or is there room? Mr. Williams responded Ellsworth Loop and Rittenhouse roads have already been built to their ultimate configurations which is good. Mr. White's point was if Ellsworth/Rittenhouse roads are opened, will it make a dent in the traffic on Rittenhouse.

Vice-Mayor Benning referred to page 19 Figure 6, stating he is curious and bothered by the fact that the forecast going on Rittenhouse northwest of Town Center seems suspicious at a volume of 53,000, considering it's still one lane in each direction, whereas, especially with SR 24 opening in two years, it would seem like more traffic would be headed north. Secondly, Benning questioned if the projected numbers from the upcoming Queen Creek Station Major General Plan Amendment have been taken into account, or do the numbers shown just use a basic prediction for growth; Benning also asked if Fulton comes in and builds a road that connects to old Ellsworth at that intersection, will that change the model or is it different as a "T". Build-out shows this as a T-intersection.

Mr. Williams responded Queen Creek Station is not in this model. The only ones modeled are in color from the downtown plan, so additional traffic from the Fulton development would be added to these numbers. SWTE has this information; they can add it to the numbers. Mr. Williams noted he has been tasked by the Town to do this traffic study in order to confirm the applicant's figures, along with La Jara Farms.

In reference to Benning's first question about the traffic forecast northwest of Town Center on Rittenhouse, Mr. Williams stated the MAG model is regional, because it stretches so far into Pinal County. There is a high number of traffic and a lack of north-south connectors because of the railroad. Therefore, traffic is just trying to find a route to get to the next route. This is shorter and faster than coming up and around, so Rittenhouse does get a high traffic volume because it has the lanes of capacity. 2031 assumes five lanes all the way to Power Road. Vice-Mayor Benning asked for a copy of the new map with revised numbers that SWTE used. Mr. Williams provided the maps and noted they are already included in the information distributed tonight.

David Bond asked if the SOW so far to get to this level also includes traffic counts for current data. Mr. Williams said they used 2009 traffic counts and some data from the Town. He explained traffic in some areas has decreased; therefore, they are considering a conservative estimate. Mr. Williams said occasionally there may be 100 right turns at the intersection and MAG's model shows 90 in 2031. It is SWTE's job to look at this and realize it's unrealistic. Mr. Turley referred to the population

projections for Queen Creek to be more than doubled by 2020, based on last month's presentation by Wayne Balmer. Mr. White responded by citing specific information from Balmer's previous presentation in September, which showed population a little less than doubling by 2020.

Bill Birdwell provided clarification on the "F" LOS shown on the study, noting "F" is at peak hour, not 24-hours a day. He noted the overlap referred to in the report will only work when there are not opposing left turns. He stated looking at AM and PM peak hours, it is split 25/75. Vice-Mayor Benning asked how ITS programming handles this. Mr. Birdwell said they force every phase to run, and at this intersection they would have to revert back to a demand type of functionality which can create some speeding issues during heaviest peak travel times. He reiterated there is only an overlap when there are double left turn (southbound lefts), but will have to hold northbound traffic throughout entire phase for southbound lefts.

Andrew Smigielski from SWTE stated Ellsworth Loop and Rittenhouse is the biggest intersection. Once volumes are realized, there will be parallel routes (Meridian and Riggs). It's the nature of growth. He said the counts will start leveling off and spreading out. Drivers will go to new routes. He compared this data to Tucson, where there are six lanes, dual lefts, through lanes and right-turn lanes, and their LOS is still "F". There will be more main intersections just like Ellsworth Loop and Rittenhouse as new roads are built when growth occurs. Chairman Nichols thanked SWTE for their time.

Mr. White asked for a motion to continue this to next meeting until data is received on the area north of Rittenhouse Road (will traffic be improved on Rittenhouse Road if Ellsworth is four lanes versus two?).

The TAC concurred in bringing this item back to the November meeting for a formal recommendation.

Item D. Discussion on Meridian Design Concept Report

Ryan Nichols

Mr. White stated the Design Concept Report on developing a preferred alignment for the Meridian/Riggs/Rittenhouse roads corridor has been compiled. He referred to Exhibits in the Staff Report: Attachments "B", "C" and "D", which represent alternatives for potential roadway alignments. He stated representatives from MCDOT and TY-Lin will be in attendance at the November TAC meeting, with the goal that the Town and MCDOT can reach a consensus on one of these alternatives. The information is being distributed at this time so TAC members have an opportunity to review all the material and be prepared with ideas and reasons for which alternative would be best for the Town. Mr. White reminded the group that once TAC recommends approval of a specific alignment, it will go out to the community and businesses in this area with a request for their consensus on the preferred alternative, and then to Town Council for approval. This assumes everyone involved in the project can come to a consensus.

Vice-Mayor Benning asked if there is a Town stakeholder from ACC to opine regarding additional improvements or widening the at-grade crossing. He seems to remember ACC said they would not allow any further improvements for at-grade crossings. Pecos/Power was last time they would allow that to happen. Mr. White responded the railroad wants to remove two existing crossings for every new crossing added to the system. The Town and Pinal County are not giving up any as far as he knows, therefore, Alternative "C" may not work. Alternative B would be okay because there is no new crossing, just widening an existing crossing. Alternative D could be debatable, in that you may be successful arguing with the railroad that this is just improving an existing crossing and leaving it where it's at to accommodate more traffic. TY-Lin and MCDOT will speak to this question.

Mr. White suggested looking at this from a perspective of what will be in the best interest of the Town.

David Bond asked if there's a huge difference in funding and/or joint funding with this having multiple jurisdictions. There was brief discussion about funding. TAC requested cost estimates on each of the Alternative alignments ("B", "C" and "D").

Item E: Request for future agenda items

Vice-Chair

Clark

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, November 8, 2012.

1. Meridian DCR action (MCDOT, TY-LIN)
2. Major General Plan Amendments – 2012 (Wayne Balmer and SWTE representatives)

5. Announcements

Bill Birdwell raised the issue of potential site visibility and/or turning radius problems at Barnes Parkway and Crismon Road, as briefly discussed by TAC at the September meeting when the issue was raised by Vice-Chairman Chris Clark. Mr. Clark reiterated that when pulling up to this intersection, the natural tendency is to pull forward, but then you're in the lane of traffic without realizing it. It may have something to do with the shoulder on the opposite side being too large.

David Bond stated when eastbound on Barnes Parkway, he has a tendency to swing wide when getting onto Crismon Road. Mr. Birdwell said looking south, there is a large paved shoulder but it narrows down to 12-18 inches. Traffic is swinging into the left-turn lane. Town staff can take care of this pretty easily, but the other issue is an Irrigation District issue. If you sit and pull up and are careful, you can pull up another two feet, which is 15 feet from the face of the curb. You can pull up enough to see oncoming traffic without being out in the intersection. But there is a tendency to turn wide, which is unintentional. David Bond agreed something is not right at this intersection; it geometrically feels wrong.

Mr. White asked Bill Birdwell to further research the turning radius at the corner of Barnes/Crismon. Mr. Birdwell responded if it is not a radius issue, he suspects it is a site line issue. If it's a radius issue, it will be a huge fix due to the Irrigation District standpipe.

Vice Mayor Benning questioned the uneven alignment of Spyglass which shifts west as it goes north. Mr. Birdwell responded this is because only one side of the road was improved. Mr. Benning then asked why the half-street is not in the middle of the street, noting the southbound lane stays in the same place the entire way, but at Spyglass, the center turn lane becomes the second of two northbound lanes. Mr. Birdwell responded it could be because right-of-way was only 33 feet, and the Town took 55 feet from Langley Gateway Estates. Mr. Birdwell will go back and look at the radius and talk to Engineering about it, and confirm or deny that it is driver perspective.

Andrew Smigielski noted there will be an annual traffic engineers' (western states) conference at Biltmore in July, 2013. At this conference, traffic issues across the entire western U.S. will be discussed.

Nichelle Williams complimented staff on the work in Villages (sidewalks/round-abouts).

Vice-Mayor Benning stated he would like to do a groundbreaking for the sidewalk in front of the church for handicapped residents. Troy White and Vice-Mayor Benning will schedule this. Benning asked the TAC members to attend this groundbreaking.

Mr. White notified TAC that construction of sidewalk where sidewalk gaps exist in and around Town Center will begin shortly. The first phase of work includes installing sidewalks on Ellsworth Loop Road between Quick Trip and Maya Road, per the sidewalk gap analysis.

6. Adjournment

Nichelle Williams made a motion to adjourn, seconded by David Bond. All ayes. Motion carried unanimously 8-0. The meeting adjourned at 7:50 P.M..

PREPARED BY:

Laura Moats, Development Services Assistant

PASSED AND APPROVED ON: __November 8, 2012

Ryan Nichols, Transportation Advisory Committee Chairman