



Transportation Advisory Committee Minutes

Thursday, November 8, 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	Absent
Steve Conklin	Absent
Nichelle Williams	Present
Richard Turman	Absent
Robin Benning, Vice-Mayor	Absent
Kenn Burnell (non-voting member)	Present
Alan Turley	Present

Public:

Andrew Smigielski, PE, PTOE, PTP	Southwest Traffic Engineering
Chris Williams, PE, PTOE	Southwest Traffic Engineering
Paul Basha	EPS Group
Chris Webb	Rose Law Group
Robert Myers	Queen Creek resident, business owner

Town Staff Members:

Troy White, Public Works Division Manager	Present
Wendy Kaserman, Assistant to the Town Manager	Present
Wayne Balmer, Planning Administrator	Present
Laura Moats, Development Services Assistant	Present

1. Call to Order:

Vice-Chairman Clark 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 October 11, 2012 minutes Chairman Nichols

Motion by Alan Turley, to approve the October 11, 2012 minutes, as presented, seconded by Nichelle Williams. Motion carried 5-0.

Item B: Update on ADOT Passenger Rail Corridor Study Wayne Balmer/Wendy Kaserman

Planning Administrator Wayne Balmer gave a brief presentation on the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) Passenger Rail Corridor Study (Study). He informed the Committee that MAG had conducted a light rail study (how to get commuters from Queen Creek to downtown Phoenix). The ADOT study focuses on how to move traffic from Phoenix to Tucson. Mr. Balmer illustrated the time line, starting with public input in 2011, initial meetings wherein it was determined to move forward with the study; developing alternatives, and an analysis of the alternatives. ADOT is at a point in the Study where they have identified seven possible alternative routes, and are seeking public comment by December 15, 2012. ADOT will be meeting with each jurisdiction prior to further narrowing the options to two-three alternative routes. Unfortunately, no funding has been identified for a passenger rail system. The TAC recommendation will be forwarded to Council, after which time a formal recommendation will be sent from the Town to ADOT.

The seven alternative routes were included in the *Public Participation Handbook*, which was distributed to TAC with the staff report. The routes were color-coded: Blue, Green, Orange, Purple, Red, Teal and Yellow. Mr. Balmer stated the Town is interested in the Yellow alternative, specifically, where stations will be located and how far apart or close together they will be. He stated the Yellow option covers the existing railroad right-of-way and shares a line with the freight railroad. The Teal line mostly uses right-of-way, but builds new elements and some new construction. Mr. Balmer explained as ADOT looked at alternatives, they reviewed and rated the routes by strong, favorable and least favorable, the results of which are shown on a dot graph in the handbook. The Teal line scored favorably; therefore, Town staff is looking for the Mayor to send a letter to ADOT recommending the Teal route.

Mr. Balmer informed the Committee of the public meetings being held and their locations.

Vice-Chairman Chris Clark asked about the Orange route, which also was listed as favorable in the dot graph. Assistant to the Town Manager Wendy Kaserman stated Orange did not score well in financial feasibility. She stated she has done public outreach to neighboring areas so all can submit comments more supportive of the Teal or Yellow alignments. She stated Gilbert and Florence are leaning toward Yellow, and there will be regional support for the Yellow route. She noted the map is not to scale, and explained the Teal and Yellow routes are only about 1.5 to 1.25 miles away from Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport, so there would be potential for some type of train going to Gateway. Mr. Balmer added the route will probably go from east of the mountains to west of the mountains.

The path of the Orange line was shown. Mr. Balmer explained it did not score well in Financial Feasibility due to the fact it would require a lot of relocations of existing businesses and homes.

Member Kenn Burnell noted the Orange route comes close to Apache Junction, where others are far away. He would imagine Apache Junction residents would not like the Teal/Yellow alternative.

Motion by Alan Turley to recommend to Council the preferred routes be either the Teal or Yellow route, seconded by Nichelle Williams. Motion carried 5-0.

Public Works Manager Troy White presented the final Town Center Small Area Transportation Study (SATS) Executive Summary. He noted this was reviewed in detail at the October TAC meeting. Staff requested SWTE do an analysis of the impact of constructing the Ellsworth North Connector between Rittenhouse and Ellsworth Loop roads as a four-lane cross section to determine if it would change the Level of Service (LOS). He drew TAC's attention to page 4 of Executive Summary, noting the LOS would improve at the intersection of Ellsworth and Rittenhouse roads, but would decrease for the Ellsworth Loop Road northbound traffic at the north connector intersection. With this determination, it is the recommendation of SWTE to have the connector from Rittenhouse Road to Barnes Parkway as a two-lane road, which staff supports. Chris Williams from SWTE noted he re-ran the traffic model with four lanes on Ellsworth North connector road. He stated having four lanes saves three seconds, but creates more problems. There is no gain from having four lanes on a cut-through route. He noted a two-page section was added to the SATS showing traffic volumes; this is summarized in the Executive Summary.

Member Alan Turley asked about the vacant land surrounded by cut-offs, asking what the likelihood is of infilling these areas; he asked if this would change the estimates, and if the school district has an opinion. Troy White responded the original report looked at existing zoning which was tabulated into the results. It takes into account the vacant land in the Town Center area, as well as current zoning.

Vice-Chairman Clark added the traffic model includes Town Center and what is currently proposed, as well as Queen Creek Station.

Vice-Chairman Clark asked if he should vote or declare a conflict of interest. It was agreed he does not have a direct conflict, since he has no financial interest in the recommendation. He is acting as a resident.

Vice-Chairman Clark stated the Queenland Manor HOA is looking forward to a decision. Chairman Nichols summarized, stating the process started 6-8 months ago with the decision of whether or not to abandon the right of way to property owners to improve aesthetics. It was decided to do this study to find out if there would be a need to do four lanes or if two lanes would be adequate. At this point TAC will send a recommendation to the Town Council on the final SATS study. He noted at some point TAC will discuss abandoning the right-of-way. Mr. White stated Barnes Parkway is shown as a traffic circle. Whether it becomes a T-intersection or a traffic circle will depend on the amount of right-of-way needed or not needed.

Alan Turley asked about right-of-way in front of the school beyond where the road turns and goes west. Chris Clark responded the HOA takes it all the way up to The Bridges preschool, and would ideally like to carry landscaping through the entire section. Brief discussion about limited access for the Historical Society and the school took place. Chris noted at times there is actually more parking in the millings. There is ballpark access on the weekends.

Motion by David Bond to approve the findings of the November 2012 Town Center Small Area Transportation Study to forward to Council, seconded by Nichelle Williams. All ayes. Motion carried 5-0.

Item D. Discussion and Possible Action on 2012 Major GPA Applications **Wayne Balmer**

Planning Administrator Balmer presented the transportation-related issues on four of the six Major General Plan Amendment applications: GPA12-047: Box Canyon; GPA12-048: Bello; GPA12-049: Fulton Homes/Queen Creek Station; and GPA12-051: the Realignment of Signal Butte and Meridian roads/Transportation & Circulation Element of the General Plan.

GPA12-047:Box Canyon: Mr. Balmer stated this area is shown as a “Master Planned Community”; the subject property is not developed. The Town would like to see it as a Master Planned Community. The application includes 10 property owners. The challenges with this application are: the only frontage is off of Hunt Highway and the east side of Power Road; the west half of Power Road goes onto tribal property. The subject property is over four miles long, and includes several washes. The applicant is proposing to change the General Plan text from 1.0 dwelling unit/acre (du/acre) to 1.8 du/acre. As this property is developed, there will be higher infrastructure costs. Staff is recommending approval of the application with the following stipulations:

- The drainage, water, wastewater, traffic, environmental and other issues are addressed as part of any rezoning request for a land use change;
- The property is planned and developed as a unified project with a coordinated development concept.

Mr. Balmer stated the Planning & Zoning Commission supported staff’s recommendation, but spent a lot of time on the transportation issues. Andrew Smigielski of Southwest Traffic Engineers (SWTE) stated by changing the zoning to 1.8 du/acre, expected traffic volume is 35,000 vehicles/day out of one intersection, which is very high and raises safety concerns as well as the fact the main entrance does not align with either Power or Sossaman Road; therefore, if this is a destination area for people to live or if there’s another destination draw, there cannot be a big intersection that is not aligned with Power and Sossaman roads with 35,000 vehicles a day traveling through the intersection. Another concern is when this is developed Power Road, Sossaman Road and Hunt Highway will all need improvements, since there are several two-lane sections of road. Mr. Balmer noted the property owners are aware of these issues. Mr. Smigielski stated he would recommend the access at least align with Power and potentially have another entrance to the site. Mr. Balmer noted it would be necessary to acquire right-of-way onto the tribal community to get alignment with Power. Sossaman and Bell roads have homes on 5-and 10-acre lots, and there is a narrow two-lane access road to those properties. The Box Canyon property does not have access to that area. To develop Bell Road would change the character of this area. Staff has informed the applicant this would be a way to financially move the project forward because without the alternatives, the Town will not rezone property.

Alan Turley asked if the Town could talk to Maricopa County about putting a road in, which would provide more access to the San Tan Mountain Regional Park. Mr. Balmer indicated where the main visitor’s center and access is, and stated the County probably would not be interested in doing more improvements in the Box Canyon area without incentives. He noted the Town has informed the applicant of what needs to be done if the site is going to develop, but not necessarily “how” it needs to be done. Mr. Turley suggested it would be beneficial to leave the large properties along Bell Road alone, and develop an access road on the back side. Mr. Balmer agreed.

Chairman Nichols reminded the group that TAC is not discussing solution; only asking if there’s anything prohibiting this project from moving forward in the future. If TAC sees some potential solutions, then it could recommend approval, knowing in the future, the applicant will have to come up

with solutions and no development will occur unless solutions are made.

Mr. Balmer restated staff's recommendation, noting the Planning & Zoning Commission recommended approval of the applicant according to staff's recommendation.

Vice-Chairman Clark made a motion to recommend approval of GPA12-047, Box Canyon, with the stipulations provided by staff, seconded by Alan Turley. Motion carried 5-0.

GPA12-048: Bellerio: Mr. Balmer provided background on the application, noting the original Pegasus Estates subdivision was approved in 2004, as R1-35 PAD, plus a clear zone for the Pegasus Airpark, which included 89 lots. The applicant is proposing to amend the General Plan to increase the number of lots to 178, to include a mixture of smaller and larger lots.

Andrew Smigielski from SWTE stated with 100 lots, traffic levels are expected to double; however, the impact is very limited. The traffic study showed the intersection at Pegasus Parkway and Empire Blvd. would operate at an adequate Level of Service. Mr. Smigielski noted that once commercial development occurs adjacent to Ellsworth Road, another review would be necessary. He is not expecting extra traffic from the additional proposed homes to have any major impact.

Alan Turley stated that it seems like police and fire would have a concern about having no other outlet other than the meandering road. He asked if another access point onto Ellsworth Road should be stipulated. Mr. Balmer responded staff considered this possibility, but there is still a southern entrance' therefore, having an additional access was not seen as being essential.

Vice-Chairman Clark asked if the proposed additional lots affect the internal circulation regarding design standards. Chairman Nichols confirmed that Mr. Clark was referring to traffic calming and limiting lengths of roadways, to which Mr. Clark agreed. Chairman Nichols then clarified that internal traffic design standards will be more thoroughly reviewed at the time rezoning and site plan cases get processed. Mr. Balmer added, at this point, the layout he is illustrating is only a concept plan. It has not developed into a formal rezoning case.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Clark to recommend approval of GPA12-048, Bellerio, as presented, seconded by David Bond. Motion carried 5-0.

GPA12-051: Realignment of Signal Butte/Meridian roads: Mr. Balmer explained the Town's goal to connect to the SR24 interchange, however, Signal Butte Road dead-ends at Ocotillo Road. A realignment of Signal Butte and Meridian roads was proposed when the Barney Farms Major General Plan Amendment was processed. This change would delete the "Roadway Realignment Area" from the General Plan Land Use map, and re-designate this as the new official location of the proposed realignment. Mr. Balmer stated in addition, the Town owns property to be designated as "East Park", the north side of which would be cut off by the roadway realignment. There would still be an irregular shape, which would not be beneficial to the Town. The Town has decided to trade 127 acres to facilitate this property going back to the owner of this parcel to do a development plan of the entire square mile. This will give the Town the best frontage it can have with a continuous street system all the way into Pinal County, giving the Town more development opportunities where commercial/employment uses are designated.

Mr. Smigielski noted SWTE has no concerns. He agrees it is a good idea to move the park out of this major connector road area. In the future, SWTE will look at what are the radiuses on curves and how Meridian and Signal Butte will come back into the connector roads.

David Bond commented on the possible naming of this realignment, suggesting this discussion take place sooner rather than later. Mr. Balmer briefly spoke about street numbering.

David Bond asked to see the SR24 map to see the projection of where it will line up. Mr. Balmer explained the issues surrounding why SR24 ends where Pinal County starts at Signal Butte Road. He showed the footprint of the Eastmark property, stating Mesa recently approved two zoning projects with densities higher than that of Eastmark. He stated this area will become a major employment area.

Vice-Chairman Clark made a motion to recommend approval of GP12-051, Realignment of Signal Butte and Meridian roads, as presented by staff, seconded by Nichelle Williams. Motion carried 5-0.

GPA12-049, Queen Creek Station:

Chairman Nichols reminded members to focus on transportation issues, as opposed to land uses. Mr. Balmer provided background on this application. He stated Queen Creek Station was originally approved in 2007 with the realignment of Queen Creek and Ellsworth roads. It was approved as a Mixed Use and Single Family residential project, and included density of up to 8 dwelling units/acre near the center of the site. He explained the two new zoning classifications, which were approved at that time: MHDR-A and MHDR-B, surrounded by lower density areas. At that time, there were a lot of property owners comprised in one group. The new application has several property owners being represented by Rose Law Group. He explained the background which led to the approved realignment of Ellsworth and Queen Creek roads, stating at that time the idea was to provide a way around Ellsworth Road toward the airport, university and employment areas, with a smoother transition. There was no regular grid system to help the traffic in this area, so this realignment was an alternative. Mr. Balmer spoke about the previously approved land uses (movie theater, offices, commercial core) and illustrated the approved land use plan, noting it was important that the street system was realigned to facilitate higher intensity land uses which generated increased traffic and would affect roadways. As a result, an amendment to the Transportation and Circulation Element of the General Plan was approved. The applicants under the current proposed amendment which to keep Ellsworth/Queen Creek roads on their current alignment, with commercial and mixed use areas to be reduced in acreage and intensity. Most of the residential area is to be designated MHDR-A, with lower density residential being reduced or deleted.

A proposed land use map was illustrated. Mr. Balmer questioned: with the request to retain the current alignment of Queen Creek and Ellsworth roads, will the fact that Queen Creek road does not go through to Rittenhouse Road on the west be a problem. Mr. Balmer explained as the airport develops and grows, Mesa has good access while Queen Creek does not. The challenge is to plan a good transportation system that gives residents good access to the airport.

The Committee discussed in detail the advantages and disadvantages of keeping the current alignment. SWTE noted if the alignment stays "as-is", the many signals along Ellsworth Road will be an issue for progression. If access is limited and cross access is provided to commercial, this should help some of the progression issues and potential vehicle conflicts. Mr. Balmer stated there will be a signal going in as proposed by Fulton (at their entry), which will initially be a T. It will be four lanes into the future. Mr. Balmer stated he does not know when it will be done, but Town will mandate this because it will also be frontage for the employment area. He noted one issue that may come up in the future is mixed uses or commercial project developers may ask for another signal some place in the middle. There is already a signal south of that location and a bridge planned.

Alan Turley stated in terms of making the extension of Queen Creek Road make sense, what is shown as the existing layout is a better layout. He does not like the off-set of Queen Creek Road, and is not in favor of an additional light at Germann Road. Since the traffic is heavy in this section, with lanes transitioning from 4 to 3 to 2 lanes coming south, intersection improvements would be necessary. He stated if some of those problems can be solved in the recommendation made, it will be beneficial to the Town.

Chairman Nichols asked Mr. Paul Basha from EPS Group to explain what the impact would be of new development on Ellsworth Road to the north. Mr. Basha responded explained Fulton Homes hired EPS and asked if there was any merit in keeping Queen Creek Parkway in alignment with Queen Creek Road. Can Ellsworth road be two lanes north of Ryan road? He stated with current traffic volumes, it can. As development occurs it will need to be increased to two lanes in each direction for a while, and then within next 20 years as development occurs in the area, it will need to be increased to three lanes in each direction.

Vice-Chairman Clark provided background on the original concept plan and the currently approved General Plan. He stated the Parkway idea was partially to protect the middle school, but mostly because there will be a lot more traffic generated on Crismon Road. As development occurs, there will be cut through traffic, as improvements take place. Queen Creek Road would go through. He stated one of the biggest arguments is Ellsworth Road cannot be shifted because the City of Mesa will not do it. He talked about smoothing out the radius of the existing Ellsworth and Queen Creek roads and making a right turn of some type, noting the reason for the parkway was for expected increased traffic flow, to smooth out the Queen Creek transition, and eliminate a light. These are all important considerations. He noted he has met with the applicant and his representative. This plan could work, but he does not know if it is the best one for the Town from a transportation standpoint. The only advantage he can see is getting half-street improvements made sooner rather than later.

Nichelle Williams stated the biggest concern for her is traffic between Queen Creek Road and Germann roads on Ellsworth Road. She stated even when she's on road at night and there is not a lot of traffic, she is fearful of the current design. She feels any more development here will really have a sharp impact. The light will be good for individuals making left/right turns, but for the majority looking for a straight through, there will be frustrations with individuals coming in and out of town.

Vice-Chairman Clark noted the issues concerning residents and businesses in the area: on the west side the Ellsworth Mini-Farms have put in commercial development under a Special Use Permit, and are anxious to keep Ellsworth Road where it is. People getting irrigation have expressed concerns due to the standpipe; the well head is only a few feet off the roadway; and the horse properties bordering Ellsworth do not like the idea of expansion in this area. He stated everyone has asked for some sort of turn lane to get on Superstition and Ryan roads.

David Bond asked if the current alignment is maintained, is there any chance of removing the signal once additional circulation comes in. Mr. Balmer stated a signal will need to be maintained at this location.

Further discussion followed comparing how the currently approved realignment and the proposal to maintain the current alignment relate to the location of and number of traffic signals, traffic congestion, potential rights-of-way, access points, the staff recommendation and Planning & Zoning Commission's recommendation.

There are two components in this amendment: 1) land use which impacts traffic in general; and 2) traffic circulation. Chairman Nichols stated the Committee could recommend a modification that would include the realignment of Queen Creek Road to align with Queen Creek Parkway. He stated from a personal opinion, he feels regardless of the land use on the east side, realignment would still be better solution than to not realign.

Chairman Nichols suggested TAC focus on the following traffic-related options: 1) Concur with staff's recommendation to put Queen Creek and Ellsworth roads on their present day alignments; 2) Maintain

the realignment of Ellsworth Road; or 3) Put Ellsworth on its present day alignment and realign Queen Creek Road?

Vice Chairman Clark clarified the recommendation TAC is to make, and noted he would like to focus on transportation circulation elements, and does not want to involve proposed land uses in the Committee recommendation.

David Bond made a motion to recommend approval of GPA12-049, Queen Creek Station/Fulton Homes, as proposed, but that the applicant realign Queen Creek Road to line up with Queen Creek Parkway at its present north/south alignment of Ellsworth Road as shown on the “currently approved (2007) plan”, seconded by Chris Clark. Motion carried 5-0.

Item E: Request for future agenda items Vice-Chair Clark

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, December 13, 2012. Tentative agenda items include:

1. Meridian DCR action (MCDOT, TY-LIN)
2. Walkability Presentation by Ryan Wozniak, Planning Intern (Staff)
3. Discussion on Site Visibility/Turning Radius issues at Barnes Parkway/Crismon Road (Staff)

5. Announcements

Vice-Chairman Clark informed the Committee of the Holiday Festival & Parade on Dec1. He stated Ellsworth Road will be blocked from Sierra Park Blvd. to Rittenhouse Road. He is seeking volunteers and vendors.

Troy White made the following announcements:

- The sidewalks have been installed on Ellsworth Loop Road between Quick Trip and Maya Road. Further sidewalk installations will be done in December.
- Demolition on the old church building will be starting November 12. Demolition on the four vacant homes on Ocotillo Road west of Ellsworth Road will start November 19.
- Construction on the traffic signal at Chandler Heights and Sossaman roads will start soon, with completion anticipated in mid-January.

6. Adjournment

Alan Turley made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Nichelle Williams. Motion carried 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:42 P.M..

PREPARED BY:

Laura Moats, Development Services Assistant

PASSED AND APPROVED ON: ____January 10, 2013_____

Ryan Nichols, Transportation Advisory Committee Chairman