



## **Transportation Advisory Committee Minutes**

Thursday, January 10, 2013, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.  
Town Hall – Council Chambers

### **Committee Members:**

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

### **Public:**

Andrew Smigielski, PE, PTOE, PTP	Southwest Traffic Engineering
Chris Williams, PE, PTOE	Southwest Traffic Engineering
Nariman Zadeh	MCDOT
James Barr	TY-LIN International

### **Town Staff Members:**

Troy White, Public Works Division Manager	Present
Laura Moats, Development Services Assistant	Present
Ryan Wozniak, Planning Intern	Present

### **1. Call to Order:**

Chairman Nichols called the meeting to order at 6:35 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 November 8, 2012 minutes Chairman Nichols**

**Motion by Chris Clark, to approve the November 8, 2012 minutes, as presented, seconded by Alan Turley. Motion carried 8-0.**

**Item B: Discussion and Possible Action on Meridian Road DCR** **Troy White**

Public Works Manager Troy White briefly explained the background on the project, stating there were originally six alternative designs, which was subsequently narrowed to three new alternatives, which have come back to the Committee for discussion and recommendation. After the Maricopa County Department of Transportation receives formal comments from TAC, the Town and MCDOT will meet with business owners and the public. Mr. White requested either TAC provides a recommendation tonight or if they prefer, the Committee can wait until public comments have been addressed before making a formal recommendation.

James Barr with TY-LIN provided a handout and made a presentation, which included the following:

Future land uses as identified in the Town's current land use plan, at the Meridian/Rittenhouse/Riggs intersection:

- Regional Commercial Center at southwest corner (Meridian Crossing-Westcor)
- Commercial Services at northeast and northwest corners
- Mixed-Use at northwest and northeast corners (Schnepf Farms & Olive Mill)
- Employment centers north of intersection
- High Density Residential at southeast corner (Parks Development)
- Nearby Regional Medical Center (Combs Road/Ironwood Drive)

Mr. Barr stated a contributing purpose of this project is the Town's Planned Transportation network:

- Meridian Road (six-lane Principal Arterial)
- Riggs Road (six-lane Principal Arterial)
- Rittenhouse Road (four-lane Arterial)
- Union Pacific Railroad (Future additional tracks)

Major Network Components

- Williams Gateway Freeway (SR 24) – Traffic Interchange with Meridian Road
- Phoenix Mesa Gateway Airport
- US 60

Project Goals

- Document existing Environment Throughout Corridor and Potential Areas of Concern
- Develop and Evaluate Feasible Alternatives for Five-Point Intersection (UPRR/Rittenhouse Road/Riggs Road/Combs Road/Meridian Road)
- Develop and Evaluate Feasible Drainage Solutions Associated with Alternatives for Five-Point Intersection
- Identify Utility Conflicts and Recommend Resolutions to Conflicts (well sites, other irrigation facilities)
- Develop Recommended Right-of-Way "setbacks" for Project Corridor, Including Five-Point Intersection.

Mr. Barr noted the main purpose of this project is to come up with a design that can provide for good access to all the business owners and property owners of this area, which will spur economic development, and eventually increase sales tax revenue for the region. There is no identified funding for the final design or construction in the Five-Year Capital Improvement Program. The DCR will

primarily serve as a right-of-way protection document between now and the start of construction for new development in Queen Creek and Pinal County.

Mr. Barr illustrated the Outline advantages and disadvantages of each of the alternatives:

Alternative 6 from June, 2010:

*Pros:*

- All major turning movements provided
- Maintains roadway alignments
- Acceptable intersection operations
- Consistent with long range planning (Meridian & Riggs/Combs remain on section line)

*Cons:*

- Elevated intersection (due to UPRR crossing)
- Restricted access near five-point intersection

Intersection Project Costs: \$78,606,564

Alternative 6A (April, 2011):

*Pros:*

- Relatively “at-grade” intersections
- “Easier” alternative for future access
- Accommodates both regional and developmental traffic
- Creates a “destination” for this area of Queen Creek
- Balances competing interests (commuter/commercial/residential)

*Cons:*

- Still expensive

Intersection Project Costs: \$76,177,679

Mr. Barr explained the elevated intersection shown in Alternative 6 makes emergency access difficult, which is why Alternative 6A was created. Alternative 6A removed grade separated/elevated intersections, which led to easier access.

Alternative 6A was modified in August 2011. Mr. Barr noted the new rendering was shown to the property owners to garner their feedback. He stated Queen Creek Olive Mill has been supportive all along. Schnepf Farms re-evaluated their position, and stated they would not support Alternative 6A, or any plan which would significantly impact Schnepf Farms. At that time, Westcor Development also revised their development plans, stating they would no longer be planning a Regional Commercial Center within the project area.

In March, 2012, the design team explored new alternatives maintaining the same principals as Alternatives 6 and 6A, taking the property owners’ feedback into consideration. The three new alternatives (B, C, and D) were created, all maintaining one at-grade railroad crossing.

Alternative B

- Meridian Road bridge
- Existing UPRR “at-grade” crossing on Riggs/Combs widened
- Connections between Riggs Road and Meridian Road north and south of intersection

Intersection Project Costs: \$51,831,427

### Alternative C

- Riggs/Combs Road bridge
- “At-grade” UPRR crossing moved to Meridian Road
- Connections between Riggs Road and Meridian Road north and south of intersection

Intersection Project Costs: \$47,847,373

### Alternative D

- No bridges
- Meridian realigned to existing “at-grade” UPRR crossing
- Similar to recently improved Power/Pecos intersection with UPRR
- Northeast and southwest corners: bypass right turns
- Minimal impacts to adjacent properties- potential “land swap” opportunity

Intersection Project Costs: \$27,704,598

### **Recommended Alternative:** Alternative D

- Change in planned development adjacent to intersection made this alternative more viable
- Precedents for diagonal UPRR crossings of major arterial intersections throughout Valley
- Anticipated to be favorably supported by property owners at all four corners of intersection
- With no bridges, this alternative allows for very good access for future development
- Minimal construction costs (majority of cost is for UPRR fiber optic signal equipment)

Mr. Barr stated The Olive Mill has indicated they would like to see this go to final design, at which time they'll fully evaluate their position, however they are supportive of this design.

The Power/Pecos intersection in comparison to the Alternative D design.

### Traffic Considerations:

- LOS D or better for all project intersections (LOS D for PM periods only at Meridian/Riggs and Riggs/Rittenhouse intersections).

### Queues due to train traffic:

- Approximately 1,000 foot long due to waiting for train based on 5-minute gate time
- Five-seven trains per 24-hour period

### Comparisons with Power Road/Pecos Road/UPRR ‘at-grade’ intersection:

- Traffic projections at Power/Pecos: 46,000 to 50,000 ADT
- Traffic projections at Meridian/Riggs/Combs: 34,500 to 45,400 ADT

Mr. Barr explained the specifics of how traffic would move in Alternative D, which he stated is equivalent to Level of Service-D (LOS D). He noted there would be two left-turn lanes, with majority of traffic being in the outer turn lane to go northbound on Riggs Road.

### Going Forward:

- The Meridian Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) approved Alt. D on 11/8/2012
- The UPRR has accepted the proposed alternative on 12/7/12 (pending Arizona Corporation Commission Approval)
- Approval/Input from Queen Creek TAC – today’s meeting

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- Approval/Input from Pinal County – 1/15/2013
- Approval from local residents and businesses (individual and/or public meetings) on recommended alternative
- Finalize DCR documents with preferred alternative

Questions from the Committee:

Vice-Mayor Benning requested clarification on the length of the train and estimated traffic back-up with Alternative D. Mr. Barr clarified the estimated traffic backup when train gates are down for five minutes is a 1,000-foot backup.

In response to a request from Vice-Mayor Benning, Mr. Barr pointed out traffic movements for Alternative D for afternoon traffic traveling southbound on Rittenhouse to Gary/Meridian or Combs/Riggs roads, pointing out that left-turns from Meridian to Riggs Road can bypass the train gates when they are down.

Vice-Mayor Benning asked Mr. White where the Maricopa County versus incorporated Town limits are on the north side. He noted if someone were to develop east of Meridian, they would be in unincorporated Pinal County. Mr. White confirmed that is true.

Mr. White pointed out Andrew Smigielski from Southwest Traffic Engineers (SWTE) had been asked to review each alternative from Town's perspective to determine which alternative would provide the best access to Queen Creek developments and help Queen Creek economically. Mr. Smigielski addressed the Committee to explain how he evaluated the criteria and arrived at the proposed alternative from the Town's perspective.

Nichelle Williams asked what would be the impact of the second train track on Alternative D, and what would be the associated costs. Mr. Barr responded they met with UPRR and one of their conditions of approval was if this design were constructed, the concrete crossing must be installed now. Ms. Williams asked if it is feasible this concept could be put in place before UPRR puts in the additional tracks. Mr. Barr responded, "yes".

Chairman Nichols asked Mr. Barr to compare the costs of a typical intersection with no railroad crossing so the Committee could see the magnitude of costs of this intersection and feasibility of it. Nariman Zadeh from the Maricopa County Department of Transportation responded they are currently constructing an intersection south of this area, at Empire Blvd./Meridian Road. The intersection at Empire/Meridian is a simple intersection (including some utilities relocation and drainage) and costs approximately \$2 million.

Mr. Barr pointed out the Meridian DCR is still at the design concept level, and the costs being reported do not include contingencies, construction engineering costs, construction administration and final design engineering, etc. Because this intersection is so vast versus a standard intersection, the transitions to match into the existing roadway network extend almost a mile in some instances. It is the equivalent of three or four miles of roadway improvements on top of everything else going on at intersection. This intersection includes a lot more than just a four-lane intersection. There will be significant utility costs.

Chairman Nichols reminded the Committee that no funding for design or construction is included in the five-year plan. He asked what the realistic timeframe expectation is if the chosen alternative is D, compared to the other two alternatives. Mr. White responded the more expensive the project, the longer it would take. The higher-end alternatives would delay the project by five to seven years. The project will be completed sooner at the \$27 million budget, as opposed to the \$76 million alternative. Chairman Nichols asked if Westcor came in to develop their property today, with the intersection crossings being limited, what would the traffic and improvement impacts be and how would that affect

intersection improvements done by the developer without having funding in place. Mr. White responded the Town would still ask for half-street improvements up to the intersection, or half-street contributions if the intersection could not go in at full improvements. The Town has the option to ask for the developer's quarter percent of the intersection in the form of cash-in-lieu that the Town would hold until other developers came forward. Mr. White stated it depends on what stage development/intersection improvements are at when Westcor comes in; however, the Town would either have them do half-streets up to intersection or a striping taper, but the Town would get a quarter percent of the cost of the intersection as cash-in-lieu until funding becomes available to complete the rest of the intersection.

Mr. Turley asked if the Town anticipates any problem with requiring right-of-way. Mr. Zadeh (MCDOT) responded the method of acquiring right-of-way for each project is the same and they do not anticipate problems, because there will not be any issues restraining them. Mr. Barr added the whole purpose of adopting the DCR is right-of-way protection so when developers come back, they are required to dedicate right-of-way, rather than having to go back out and purchase right-of-way for the intersection.

Vice-Mayor Benning added this process is very similar to the process that took place to establish the one-mile corridor to protect the realignment area of Signal Butte and Meridian roads.

By establishing a DCR with this project, and the land owners agree, this will formally put in place the rights-of-way for development in the future.

Chris Clark stated, based on the original discussion, Riggs Road is a primary emphasis, and he feels a bridge is needed over the intersection in this location. He stated there are higher traffic counts expected due to the regional traffic setting (east to west). He asked for clarification on this.

Mr. White responded this is dependent on accessibility to development in this area. If there is an overpass on Riggs, the major developable corner will have limited access.

Andrew Smigielski with SWTE addressed the Committee to review how objective criteria were established and explain how scoring was handled for each alternative objectively, without having one criteria overweigh another. The factors which were reviewed include:

- 1) Right-of-way requirements.
- 2) Adjacent neighborhood impacts (how much would configuration impact that from a visibility standpoint and how does the neighborhood get easily into the core area of events).
- 3) Landowner and Business owner acceptance of the plan; anticipated that there will be support for Alternative D, but they still haven't gone through the public process yet.
- 4) Time to implement: the more expensive, the longer it will take. .
- 5) Estimated cost: can it be done in a way to get funding for it?
- 6) Intersection operations: should be functional (minimize back-ups), as well as look good.
- 7) Impact on railroad crossings. All railroads have tremendous amount of criteria and requirements. Was there the ability with these alternatives to come up with a better intersection to get the railroad out of picture as much as possible?
- 8) Town-wide accessibility. Can Queen Creek residents move easily from east to west. Can they get into the Town Center? In order for this area to be popular enough to be developed, there needs to be access. From a priority standpoint, you could take the bridge as more of a parkway, but there will be visibility and access issues. It will become similar to a mini-freeway.

Member Kenn Burnell left the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Smigielski explained the evaluation matrix, which was a result of weighing each alternative. After objectively grading each alternative against the criteria, Alternative D came out as the preferred option. This needs to be agreed to by the business and property owners.

Committee Member Chris Clark stated he feels Alternative D has the biggest impact on Schnepf Farms, who has said they would not support it if it had a significant impact on them.

Mr. Smigielski responded all alternatives impact Schnepf Farms to some degree; Mr. Barr explained there is a bigger impact to Schnepf Farms in Alternative D; however, Alternative D provides land use that is more usable for retail/commercial. Alternative B includes a small, triangular parcel of land that would not lend itself to retail/commercial development.

Chairman Nichols referred to the alignment of where Rittenhouse crosses Riggs going southeast in Alternatives C and D, and asked why Alternative C crosses further to the east and Alternative D crosses further west. Mr. Barr responded it's due to signal distance and stacking distances encroaching in the intersection for left-hand turns.

Mr. White asked why this that not shown on Alternative B. Mr. Barr stated there is no signal on Alternative B since Riggs Road is raised.

Mr. Clark asked if there is any type of funding opportunity such as an Improvement District. Mr. White responded that would be an alternative that would need to go through Council. If a funding opportunity existed, then the construction time would be moved up.

Greg Arrington asked what the construction duration would be. Mr. Barr noted the project has not gotten to that stage, but he estimates one year. Mr. Zadeh concurred.

Chairman Nichols asked if traffic patterns change among the alternatives, and why the pattern is predominantly east-west, and whether or not it would change when SR 24 comes in. Mr. Smigielski stated in this section of Queen Creek, Riggs is main east-west route and that is why they expect more traffic in this direction. When SR24 is done, there may be traffic that jumps off Meridian and moves over, or off Ironwood and moves over. The expectations are not really known; however, Meridian becomes a big north-south route. He would expect development but by the time SR24 happens, there will not be that much lost off Meridian.

Chairman Nichols asked, disregarding development and only based on the way intersections are constructed, does the way the intersection develops change traffic patterns. Mr. White stated this is one of the criteria the Town asked SWTE to research: which alternative best serves the Town and makes it easier to get in and out of Queen Creek.

Mr. Smigielski stated, if we are talking strictly about Town residents, then Alternative C helps give accessibility from Riggs to Rittenhouse to Town Center, or the Power/Pecos area. Alternative D does a similar thing, except there is no bridge. Both alternatives provide access to Town Center, but the key difference is that the bridge in Alternative C helps move traffic along Riggs Road. Mr. Smigielski stated he still thinks people will move into Town Center and use Riggs Road east-west. All alternatives give decent accessibility. By keeping the Rittenhouse Road connection, there is a direct route to Town Center provided

Chairman Nichols recapped that the options are to: 1) make a recommendation tonight or, 2) delay action until further feedback has been received from the property owners and residents.

Mr. Clark stated he personally favors Alternative C, but based on the presentation, he would concur with a recommendation for Alternative D which would move much faster; he supports this alternative subject to the property and business owners' approval.

Chairman Nichols stated he feels Alternative D has only a few minor drawbacks, and an “at-grade” intersection provides some benefits. He feels this alternative provides through movements in all directions expected, and provides good access to adjacent businesses.

**Alan Turley made a motion; seconded by Nichelle Williams, to recommend Alternative D contingent on property and business owners agree with this design. If they do not, TAC will revisit and possibly make an alternative recommendation in the future.**

Mr. Turman stated he agrees with the motion, based on what they understand of the other alternatives presented.

Greg Arrington stated he agrees with Member Chris Clark. He thinks Alternative C is better for the Town; however, will concur with Alternative D.

**Voting on the Motion: All ayes. Motion carried. 7-0.**

Mr. Barr stated he will provide a 3-D rendering for the public.

This presentation and discussion ended at 7:36 p.m.

### **Item C. Presentation on Walkability**

**Ryan Wozniak, Planning**

Planning Intern Ryan Wozniak made a presentation on Walkability, which he explained is part of his Masters program. Following the presentation, Mr. Wozniak answered questions from the Committee.

Vice-Mayor Benning asked if the data presented could be expanded upon. Mr. Wozniak responded the block groups in Queen Creek are substantially larger compared to those in Phoenix; therefore, there would not be the same level of micro-detail that would be beneficial. He thinks, however, it could be expanded over time.

Chairman Nichols asked how he would affect the walkability score as an individual. Mr. Wozniak responded every property owner has an effect on pedestrians. The wider the front of someone’s property, the greater their affect on walkability scores. He sated the trends being seen in Planning are that developers are creating lots narrower and deeper, which is actually good for pedestrians in that it allows more pedestrian usability. Chairman Nichols stated he feels it falls to the community to do their part on walkability, and he would favor a Town policy issue to improve walkability scores in Queen Creek.

Mr. Arrington stated he would like to see more of an environment that is conducive to walking, as opposed to heat islands in this area which make communities less walkable. He sated there needs to be ways found to cool areas and limit heat islands. Vice-Mayor Benning asked if amenities were factored into the study; Mr. Wozniak responded, “no”.

Chairman Nichols asked what the key elements are to Queen Creek improving its walkability score; higher density, the creation of better shading? Mr. Wozniak stated pedestrian-friendly is different than a walkability score. The walkability score only takes into factor mixed use development. The walk score will increase if there is a lot of retail within a close proximity. He noted pedestrians lose interest at a half mile point. Points are lost after a quarter mile.



Chairman Nichols asked how Queen Creek can get on the right track. Mr. Wozniak stated he sees the Town Center as having plenty of opportunities with mixed use. He pointed out in-fill opportunities, stating as untapped pads come in, there will be links from one retail place to another. He suggested creating tree-lined linkages rather than big open parking lots. If there are tree-lined links, walking will not feel like a chore.

Chairman Nichols asked how bicycling factors into scores. Mr. Wozniak stated "walkscore.com" is on its way to releasing "bikescore.com." The quarter mile point where pedestrians lose interest will increase for bicyclists who can reach areas much faster than pedestrians.

He noted the bike scores in Phoenix are much different, and stated on-street parking with bicycle lanes on the inside of the on-street parking would be much safer for bicyclists.

**Item D. Discussion on Site Visibility/Turning Radius issues at Barnes Pkway/Crismon Rd. Troy White**

Mr. White provided a brief update to the Committee, stating until the other side of road develops, this will remain the way it is. When no one is at the intersection, cars coming from Crismon pull into the turn lane. They are only turning into this lane when no one else is around. It is not a hardship to stay in their lane when other traffic is present. Hopefully, new development will push the center lane over. There is no bike lane here, so that makes it a little tighter. Usually, there is more space for cars turning when there is a bike lane present. At this point, it is a safe intersection.

Mr. Turley stated he feels the width of the striped median could be a lot more narrow, thereby providing more turning room/space.

**Item E: Request for future agenda items**

**Vice-Chair Clark**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, February 14, 2013. Tentative agenda items include:

1. Overview of Current and Future projected street network
2. March agenda - update on Germann Road Corridor Study
3. Presentation by QCUSD on School Bus Stop Locations
4. Street sections analysis of walkability (specifically in Town Center)
5. Transit-Oriented Design in Town Center (making TC pedestrian- friendly/Town Center policies and their impacts on walkability and Town Center amenities)

**5. Announcements**

Vice-Mayor Benning noted the Council appreciates TAC's work on the Major GPAs, specifically Queen Creek Station. He noted Council requested a 60-day continuance in order to focus on important aspects of the case. He thanked TAC, stating Council does not want committees to feel like Council does not listen to their recommendations.

He noted the transportation issues were not dealt with by the applicant to the full extent they should have been.

Chairman Nichols reported to the Committee that all Major GPAs applications that came to TAC were approved by Council, with the exception of Queen Creek Station which has alternative recommendations. Council will hear this case again in February. A Neighborhood meeting is scheduled on January 30 at 6 pm at the Queen Creek Library, Zane Grey Room, to gather more

community feedback on land use and transportation. All are welcome to attend the neighborhood meeting to address transportation-related items.

6. **Adjournment**

**Alan Turley** made a motion to adjourn, seconded by **Greg Arrington**. Motion carried 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:31 P.M.

PREPARED BY:

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Laura Moats, Development Services Assistant

PASSED AND APPROVED ON: \_February 27, 2013\_

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**Ryan Nichols, Transportation Advisory Committee Chairman**