

## COMMENTS ON NORTHWEST FOOTHILLS TRANSPORTATION STUDY

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### COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS

#### PLAN IS FORECAST DEPENDENT AND REQUIRES FREQUENT MONITORING

The 2008 forecast for the period through 2030 was driven to a great extent by the number and magnitude of the planned communities in the foothills. Five years later you have significantly reduced the housing and job count to 57% of the previous levels (table B-1). The three largest projects represent 83% of the current forecast total. The two largest projects are forecasting an 80+% build-out of the original approved units. To date, two of the entities have not built a single unit. You have to be skeptical about the forecast of the impacts of this growth projection. You may need to monitor major growth assumptions on a more frequent basis than every five years.

#### FUTURE GROWTH FOR EAGLE

I recently did an informal windshield survey along Beacon Light Road and Floating Feather Road. The trip along Beacon Light was triggered by a comment made by an Eagle City staff member who said that the traffic on Beacon Light was 1/3 existing residences, 1/3 pass through to/from hwy 16, and 1/3 future development. I wanted a picture in my mind of where the future development would be located.

There is a very limited amount of open space for future development along Beacon Light Road until you are west of Park Lane/Linder road and on out to Hwy 16. The open space in this area runs from below Homer Lane south to Hwy 44 and includes the area adjacent to Floating Feather Road. The area for future development along Floating Feather Road begins beyond Ballantyne Lane and extends to the west and south to Hwy 44.

Why would development west of Park Lane/ Linder Road use Beacon Light Road rather than going south on Linder Road or Hwy 16, both of which are scheduled for significant expansion in this study?

#### OPENHOUSE COMMENTS

The update report included 23 submissions from attendees that included comments on various sections of the roadway expansions. The submissions included 1 that made no response, 5 that agreed with the report, and 17 that disagreed with the report. The elements that the responders disagreed with are as follows: do not expand Beacon Light beyond three lanes – 16; fix the north/south problem -6; expand the main corridors (Hwy 44, 16 and 55)-5; do not widen Eagle Rd/Willowcreek Rd -1; do not expand Linder Road-1.

The best summary of the “disagreed” comments would be: fix the north/south problem by expanding Hwy 16, Hwy 55 and Linder Road, expand Hwy 44 and do not force traffic east/west on Beacon Light or through residential neighborhoods.

It is interesting to note that there was not a single comment concerning Dry Creek or Avimor which represent 42% of the projected homes. Was this because the traffic from them would be on Hwy 55 (a

major transportation corridor) or the fact that the traffic would not flow through existing residential neighborhood?

#### PASS THROUGH TRAFFIC

As described above in the topic of “Future Growth for Eagle” a significant portion of the traffic on Beacon Light Road is described as “pass through traffic”. From a windshield observation of the traffic going west on this roadway in the evening I would have to agree that at least 1/3 of the traffic is pass through based on the number of Gem county license plates. In addition, I believe that considerable pass through traffic is utilizing Floating Feather Road between Hwy 55 and Eagle Road. A review of Table 2 Eagle Road traffic projections reflect that traffic counts between Floating Feather and Beacon Light are approximately 12% higher than between State Street and Floating Feather. Recognizing that Floating Feather Road is lined with residential housing both east and west of Eagle Road you would expect that a considerable amount of the Eagle Road traffic would turn east or west toward home. I watched this intersection one evening during commuting time and between 30% and 40% of the cars traveling north on Eagle Road turned at the Floating Feather intersection.

#### WILL CAPACITY INCREASES IN PLACE, NOW UNDER CONSTRUCTION, AND PROJECTED IN THE SHORT TERM CHANGE CURRENT BEHAVIOR?

Anyone who has used Hwy 44 in the evening traffic rush time frame has experienced the bottle neck west of Ballantyne Lane where you come to a complete halt and then move slowly on toward Hwy 16. In the recent past the intersection at Hwy 44 and Ballantyne Lane has been improved and considerable work has been done on Linder from Hwy 44 to Hwy 20/26. Table 4 Implementation Strategy of Corridor Plan (Capital Projects) Improvements includes three short term projects (two of which are under construction) and two medium term projects, all of which will significantly expand east/west roadway capacity on Hwy 44, facilitate north/south travel with an additional river crossing (Hwy 16) and make an existing one far more effective (Linder Road).

Logic would say that these significant improvements to capacity will reduce the pass through traffic on Beacon Light and Floating Feather.

#### PRESERVATION OF RIGHT OF WAY

Table 2 and Table 3 show the need to significantly widen State Hwy 16 from Chinden Blvd to Chaparral Road, Hwy 44 from Glenwood to Hwy 16, Linder Road from Chinden Blvd to Aerie Way, and Beacon Light from Hwy 16 to Hwy 55. Preservation of right of way generally means property contributions or funds made available by developers to be used for roadway expansion.

From driving and viewing these roadways, my impression, based upon: 1) what appears to be right of way already preserved and 2) open space contiguous to the existing right of way, is that Hwy 16 may be the least difficult, followed by Hwy 44 except for the portion east of Hwy 55 to Glenwood and then Linder except for costly river bridges. The most difficult would be Beacon Light: west of Linder to Hwy 16 would appear to be relatively easy, but east of Linder to Hwy 55 would be very difficult.

With very little existing preservation of right of way east of Park lane on Beacon Light and with: 72 driveways; 39 impacted houses/structures; 21 side streets and/or entrances to subdivisions; four canal bridges; and a fairly long section of canal adjacent to the existing roadway including two bridges across

the canal and one bridge over Dry Creek, expansion to five lanes would appear to be a daunting task and unnecessary with the improvements on Linder and Hwy 16. Buying right of way from this many properties would be extremely expensive. Moreover, with the existing high degree of build-out on large lots and its resulting low traffic volume due to this configuration, it is unlikely that homeowners along this stretch would be willing to sell the necessary right of way, and the majority of the needed right of way would have to be condemned.

The neighborhood impact and the cost would appear to be prohibitive on the portion of Beacon Light east of Linder Road.

#### EXPANSION OF ROADWAY SYSTEM NEEDED

A review of Table 4 is a good depiction of how far we are behind in roadway improvements and the sad state of funding. The funding available to ACHD and ITD is far less than sufficient to meet the current and projected needs. We are far behind and falling further behind every day. An adequate transportation system is the backbone of economic development and necessary to preserve our quality of life. It will take a concerted effort by the valley's cities, counties, highway districts and the public-at-large to influence the leadership at the various levels to accomplish what is needed. When can we begin and how can we influence them?

#### PROVIDE FOR TRANSIT

There are 54 projects described on Table 4 Implementation Strategy. Only two of those projects describe the use of transit concepts: the addition of HOV (high occupancy vehicle) lanes to the existing Hwy 44 roadway network from Eagle Road to Hwy 55 and from Hwy 55 to Glenwood. Can we really pave our way to meeting the transportation demands? Nobody else has been able to do it, so what has changed that would enable us to do so now?

Traffic needs to be directed to major transportation corridors where park and ride lots, car pools, van pools and various sizes of buses can be effectively utilized. Planning to facilitate these elements should be a requirement of planning functions at all levels and required of developers as part of the approval process.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Direct traffic to the major transportation corridors (Hwy 16, 44, 55) and Linder Road.
2. Expand these corridors to meet the traffic demand.
3. Move the foothills traffic north/south utilizing Hwys 16 and 55; the river crossings on Linder Road; and the new crossing on the Hwy 16 extension from Hwy 44 to Hwy 20/26 as much as possible.
4. Do not design roadways that provide for pass through traffic through east/west residential neighborhoods, specifically Floating Feather and Beacon Light Roads from Linder Road to Hwy 55; the lack of availability of developable land in those areas does not support the need for these particular expansions.
5. Develop a strategy to increase funding for transportation needs.
6. Integrate planning/implementation of transit into the planned projects.