

RESOLUTION NO. 2710

A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND COMMON COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF PAYSON, ARIZONA, SUPPORTING COMPLETION OF THE IMPROVEMENTS TO HIGHWAY 260 IN THE AREA OF LION SPRINGS AND AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR, ON BEHALF OF THE TOWN, TO FORMALLY SUPPORT SUCH COMPLETION.

WHEREAS, the Arizona Department of Transportation (“ADOT”), has spent over 300 million dollars improving Highway 87 from Phoenix to Payson, constructing a modern four lane divided highway; and

WHEREAS, ADOT has also spent over 300 million dollars improving Highway 260 east of the Lion Spring area to the top of the Mogollon Rim, constructing a modern four lane divided highway; and

WHEREAS, ADOT staff has recommended removing funding for improvements on Highway 260 in the area of Lion Springs from its 5 year plan; and

WHEREAS, such recommendation, if approved would effectively create a bottleneck (i.e., a undivided two lane roadway surrounded on both sides by a 4 lane divided highway) in the corridor between Phoenix and the top of the Mogollon Rim; and

WHEREAS, completing the four lane divided highway in the area of Lion Springs , in addition to removing this last remaining bottleneck, would provide the following benefits:

- A. *Improved safety to motorists.* This last remaining section is the source of significant accidents, both in number and severity. Because of the speeds involved and the narrowness of the roadway, many collisions in the area result in serious injury, and at times death.
- B. *Improved visitor access.* Highway 260, east of Payson and Star Valley, is the gateway to numerous high use recreation areas in the Tonto National Forest and the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, as well as northeastern Arizona communities such as Heber, Snowflake, Showlow, and Pinetop Lakeside. Residents from all over Arizona and visitors from around the United States enjoy these recreation areas. During many summer days, and especially holiday weekends, this unfinished section of Highway is more reminiscent of an urban freeway during rush hours (i.e., bumper to bumper traffic) than a highway through the beautiful pines of northern Arizona.
- C. *Improved environmental benefits.* During summer months and especially during holiday weekends, traffic in this area can come to a standstill. The exhaust from hundreds, if not thousands, of cars significantly impacts the pristine mountain air.

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- D. *Improved quality of life.* The traffic backlogs created by the bottleneck affect the main thoroughfares of both Payson and Star Valley. This creates traffic nightmares for the residents of these communities and decreased sales for the local businesses.
- E. *Protection of watershed and wildlife habitats.* Improvements to this section of Highway 260 will reduce the creation of unauthorized roads/trails into the forest protecting both the watershed and wildlife habitats. The current 2 lane roadway allows for almost unlimited egress from the roadway. The result motor vehicle damage to the watershed and habitats. The modern 4 lane divided highway provides for only limited egress, thus protecting these watersheds and habitats.
- F. *Reduced erosion.* The improvements to Highway 260 and the plans for the Lion Springs segment incorporate modern erosion control features. Such improved erosion control features need to be completed in coordination with this remaining segment.
- G. *Reduced wildlife, vehicular collisions.* This area has a high density of elk. This combination of high elk density and a narrow 2 lane roadway creates dangerous elk/ vehicle collisions. Not only are these elk/vehicle collision common, but because of the sheer mass of an elk and the vehicle speeds, these collisions are very serious, often resulting in the death of the elk and/or motorist.
- H. *Protection against/ increase ability to suppress forest fires.* This project would facilitate and improve the U.S. Forest Services' access to the forest, allowing for continued resource protection and fire protection/suppression as is necessary.
- I. *No additional environmental impact studies required.* The Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision for this project are complete. If this last bottleneck segment is postponed, it is unknown if additional NEPA studies will be needed. And if such studies are needed, if any future mitigation, not currently required, would be necessary.
- J. *Reduce unfunded local emergency service costs.* As set forth in subsections A and G above, there are numerous vehicular collisions with injuries on this section of undivided roadway. The first responders to these collisions may be the volunteer fire departments in the vicinity, but often both the Payson Fire Department and the Hellsgate Fire District are dispatched. The costs associated with maintaining the extra personnel and equipment to respond to these accidents is borne by the local tax base; and the cost of responding to the incidents is often borne by the local residents.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE MAYOR AND COMMON COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF PAYSON, ARIZONA, DO HEREBY RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. That the Town of Payson, through its duly elected Council and Mayor, supports the completion of the improvements to Highway 260 in the area of Lion Spring, and objects to its removal from ADOT's 5 year plan.

Section 2. That Kenny J. Evans, Mayor of the Town of Payson, is hereby authorized to write such letter(s), appear before the State Transportation Board, and/or take any other actions necessary to express Payson's support of such completion.

Section 3. That the Town of Payson, acting through its appropriate officers and officials, is hereby authorized to take all other actions necessary or appropriate to express its support for completing the improvements.

PASSED AND ADOPTED BY THE MAYOR AND COMMON COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF PAYSON this ____ day of _____, 2013, by the following vote:

AYES ____ NOES ____ ABSTENTIONS ____ ABSENT ____

Kenny J. Evans, Mayor

ATTEST:

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



Silvia Smith, Town Clerk

Timothy M. Wright, Town Attorney