

PAYSON GENERAL PLAN UPDATE 2014-2024
DRAFT – CHAPTER IX
CIRCULATION AND TRANSPORTATION

Prepared for:
Town of Payson, Arizona



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8 CIRCULATION/TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

Enhance the existing transportation infrastructure to increase connectivity, to improve alternative transportation, and to reduce traffic congestion.

8.1 OVERVIEW

Circulation/Transportation Vision

In 2012, the Town of Payson adopted a long-range multi-modal plan to meet the Town's circulation and transportation demands in the coming decades. In light of population growth, and economic activity driven extensively by tourist visitation, the Town took a proactive role in identifying ways to accommodate increased movement in, around and through Town. The Town collaborated with the Town of Star Valley, Tonto Apache Tribe, Gila County, Central Arizona Association of Governments, Tonto National Forest, and Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) to identify key transportation issues, and examine ways to support alternative modes of transportation including: public transit, bicycles, and safe pedestrian routes. The Town of Payson General Plan supports and facilitates key implementation priorities identified in the 2011 Town of Payson Transportation Study, conducted by ADOT (ADOT Study).⁵

Town stakeholders have four essential priorities regarding transportation infrastructure. First, the transportation infrastructure maintenance must keep pace with increased demand. Second, increase safety through traffic calming infrastructure improvements. Third, reduce congestion at peak times through circulation improvements. Lastly, create a complete multi-modal circulation network to accommodate multi-modal pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular movement. The General Plan identifies strategies to calm traffic, increase non-motorized circulation, and improve safety throughout Town and at specific key nodes.

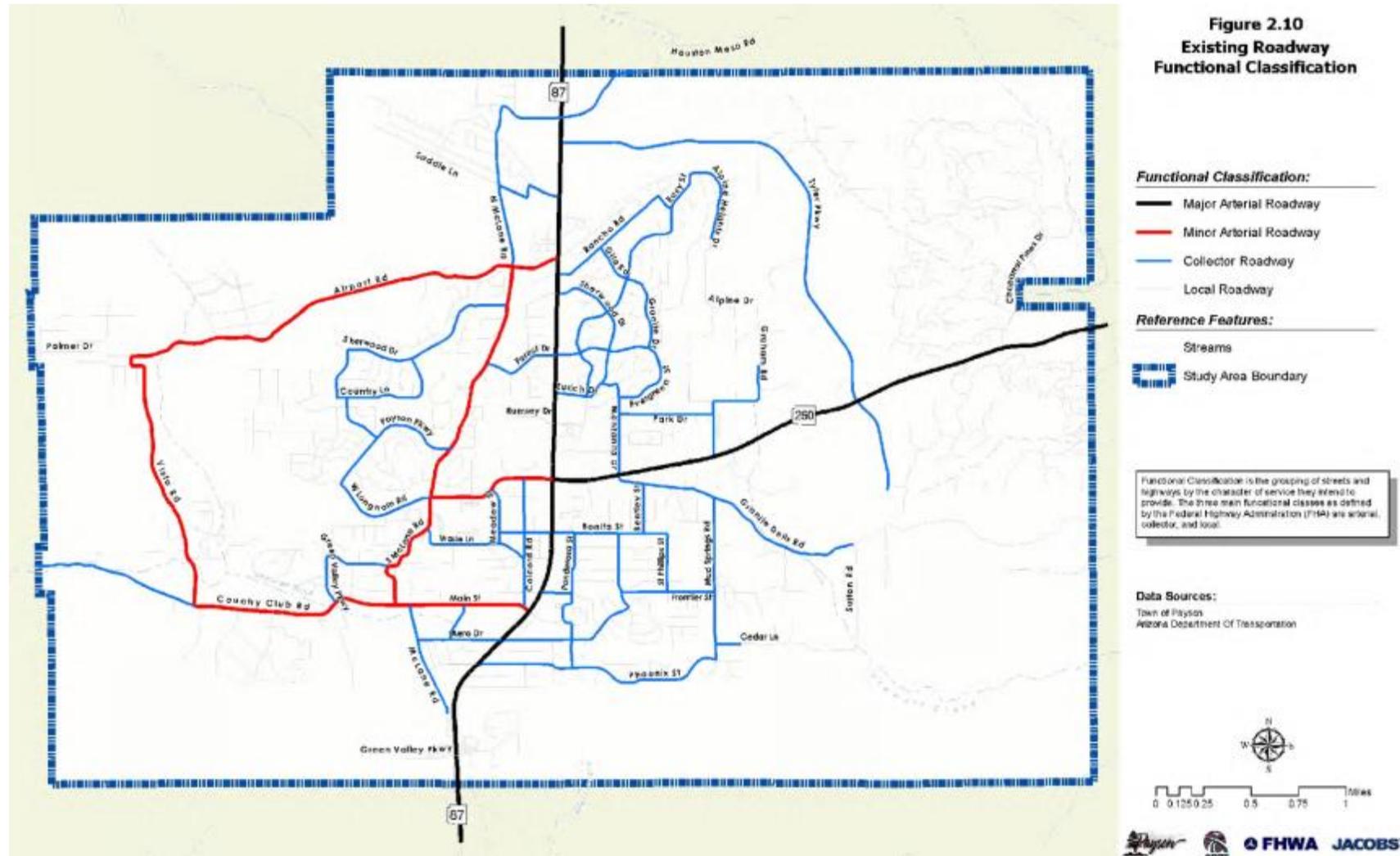
Existing Conditions

Roadways

Two Arizona State Roads, each classified as major arterials, access Payson. The north-south spine of Payson is Arizona State Road 87 (SR 87), locally known as Beeline Highway. The east-west running Arizona State Road 260 (SR 260) comes into the heart of Town from the east then turns north along SR 87 out of Town, and eventually splits west outside of the Tonto National Forest. In addition to hosting the bulk of all pass-through traffic, these two state roads serve as the primary commercial corridors in Town. Their daily vehicle miles traveled are by residents, workers, visitors and pass through travelers. Minor arterial roadways on the west side of Town do carry some bypass traffic but are not equipped to operate as heavy volume alternative routes to the Beeline Highway. Most of the local collector roadway miles wind through residential communities and open space. **Map 13**, created by Jacobs Engineering for the ADOT Study, presents the existing arterial and collector roadways in Payson.

⁵ Jacobs. (Mar 2011). *Payson Transportation Study Final Report*. Town of Payson & Arizona Department of Transportation. Retrieved 2012 from: http://www.azdot.gov/mpd/systems_planning/PDF/PARA/payson/Final.pdf

Map 13: 2011 Town of Payson Transportation Study, Existing Roadway Classifications



The Town of Payson Public Works Department maintains all public roadways within the incorporated municipal boundary, except the Major Arterials, owned and maintained by ADOT. There are four roadway functional classifications for Town roads. They are as follows:

- *Major Arterial – Defined as the State Highway through the planning area (incorporated municipal boundary). These roadways are designed to carry high volumes of traffic across the region. Within the Payson planning area, these routes generally have four to six travel lanes coupled with a two-way left turn lane.*
- *Minor Arterial – Designed with continuity that is intended to carry greater portion of through traffic from one area of the Town to another. These roadways generally have two travel lanes and may be constructed with a two-way left turn lane.*
- *Collector – Designed with the primary purpose of collecting and distributing traffic to and from the arterial streets. In the Payson area, these streets typically connect local street with arterials.*
- *Local Roads – All other roads are classified as local roads. Primary purpose of these roads is to collect and distribute traffic to and from homes and businesses to the collector streets.*

Sidewalks and On-Road Bicycle Lanes

The Town of Payson includes just over 19 square miles of land. However, land development is restricted to 13 square miles due to land within the incorporated municipal boundary owned by the U.S. Forest Service as part of Tonto National Forest. The developed portions of Town are roughly 5 miles east-west and 4 miles north-south. The concentration of development is highly conducive to non-motorized circulation around Town. At present, the Town maintains 19 miles of sidewalks, located along commercial corridors, and access routes to schools and parks. Recent road improvements to the minor arterial roads such as McLane Road and Airport Road, and residential collectors in the southeast section of Town, included the striping of three miles of on-road bicycle lanes. **Map 14**, created for the ADOT Study, presents the existing sidewalks and bicycle lanes in the Town.

Multi-Use Trails

Also shown in **Map 14** are existing and proposed multi-use trails. The majority of *Existing Trails* within the Town are in the U.S. Forest Service property that is not part of the exchange base. The ADOT Study identified a complete network for *Proposed Trails*, which in conjunction with planned investments by the Parks, Recreation, and Tourism department will increase connectivity, promote non-motorized circulation, and potentially increase visitation by Tonto National Forest users to the Town's commercial corridors. See **Map 14** (ADOT 2011) for the locations of existing and proposed trails.

Map 14: 2011 Town of Payson Transportation Study, Non-Vehicular Transportation Infrastructure



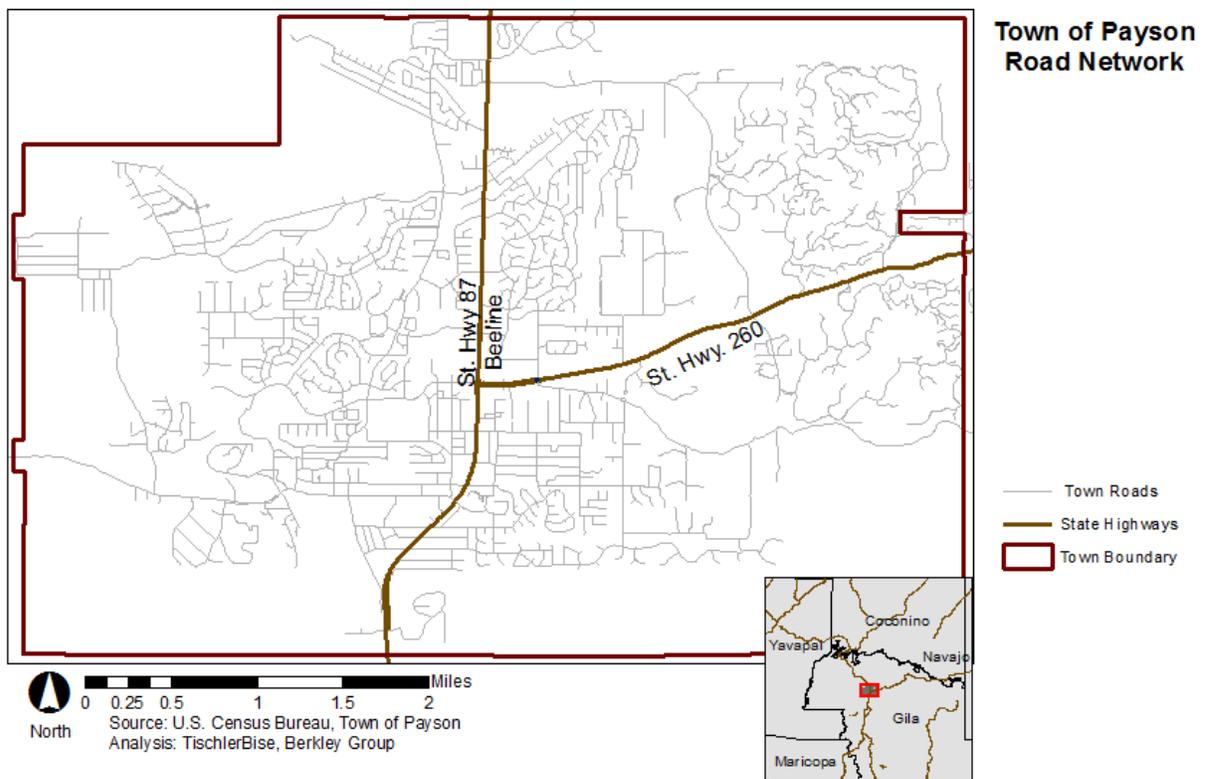
8.2 CRITICAL ISSUES

- 8.2.1 Beeline Highway traffic congestion is an increasing concern
- 8.2.2 The Town's limited ability to affect change along state-owned roads inhibits improvements
- 8.2.3 Transportation infrastructure needs improvements to reduce traffic congestion at peak times
- 8.2.4 Transportation infrastructure is not consistent
- 8.2.5 Improve neighborhood pedestrian safety

Discussion

According to the ADOT Study, Major Arterial roads carry between 15 and 30 percent more traffic during the peak summer season than yearly averages. They are also host to the greatest number of annual crashes per road segment, and per intersection of anywhere within Town. Given the annual volume of traffic on these two roads, a higher incident rate is to be expected. However, design plays a role. State Road 87 (SR 87) is a long, straight throughway with five lanes including a center, yellow-striped, turn lane. This design encourages fast movement without careful consideration to cars entering or exiting a lane of travel. Excessive curb cuts along both SR 87 and SR 260 mean entry and exit points are frequent and not controlled by traffic signals.

Map 15: 2011 Major Arterial Roads in Town of Payson



These two roads are the commercial core for Payson residents and visitors. The high volume of traffic ensures maximum visibility for retail and food service establishments, and helps to concentrate the commercial activity along these corridors and not sprawling into the residential neighborhoods of Town.

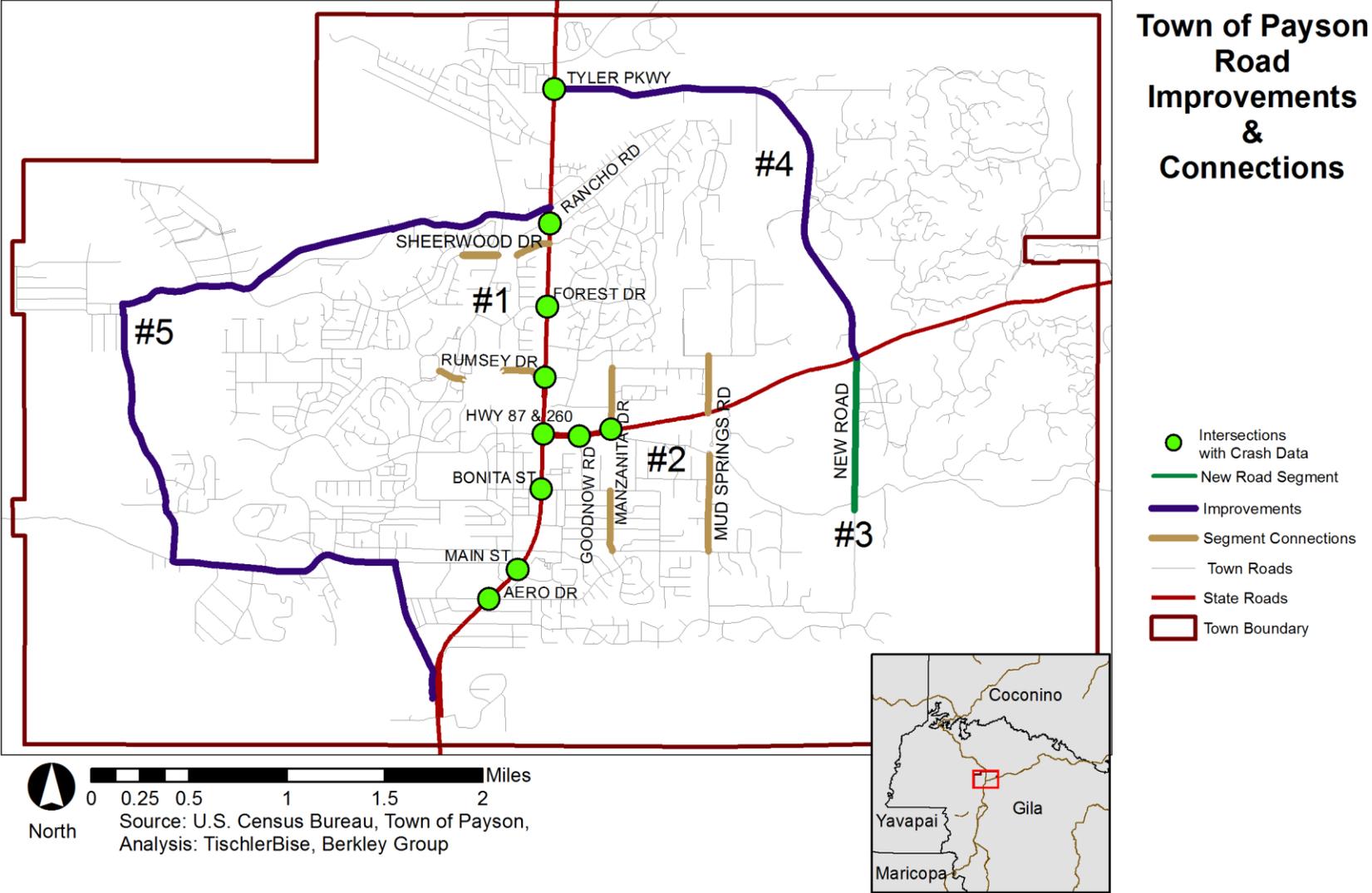
Town stakeholders, throughout the General Plan process, thought carefully to balance the desire to calm traffic on these corridors without strangling the commercial lifeblood of the community.

8.3 TRANSPORTATION DESIGN COMPONENTS

Improved Circulation

The first step in considering possible traffic improvements was to look at crash data provided in the 2011 ADOT Study. Ten intersections along State Road 87 (SR 87) and State Road 260 (SR 260) had the highest crash rates for the Town. **Map 16** shows the location of intersections with crash data and five identified circulation improvements. Each is discussed below.

Map 16: Major Arterial Circulation Improvements



#1 - Road Connections

Participants in the community workshops identified intersections and road segments in need of improvements. The community identified five road segments, which if connected would improve circulation along the major arterials. For example, if Sherwood Drive and Rumsey Drive were connected between McLane Road and Hwy 87, connection trips relying on Forest Drive would be dispersed.

#2 - Intersections with SR 260

The 1.5-mile section of SR 260 between SR 87 and Tyler Parkway has only one local road intersection at N. Manzanita Drive. South of SR 260 N. Manzanita Drive connects to E. Granite Dells Road, but not to S. Manzanita Drive. Because of these disconnects trips generated in the northeast and southeast sections of Town must use local roads, or access SR 260 from SR 87. Connecting the north and south sections of Manzanita Drive was identified as a high priority for improving circulation.

#3 - Tyler Parkway and SR 260 Growth Area

As discussed in the Growth Area Element, the U.S. Forest Service is currently negotiating the sale of lands that lay on the southwest corner of the Tyler Parkway and SR 260 intersection. The community raised concerns regarding circulation, should the property develop to its fullest capacity. Road segments on the eastern and western edge of the property were identified for circulation improvements. Flow of traffic on the western edge of the property would be improved by connecting the North and South sections of Mud Springs Road across SR 260. Completing this connection would add an additional intersection to the segment of SR 260 between SR 87 and Tyler Parkway.

#4 - East-Side Alternate Route

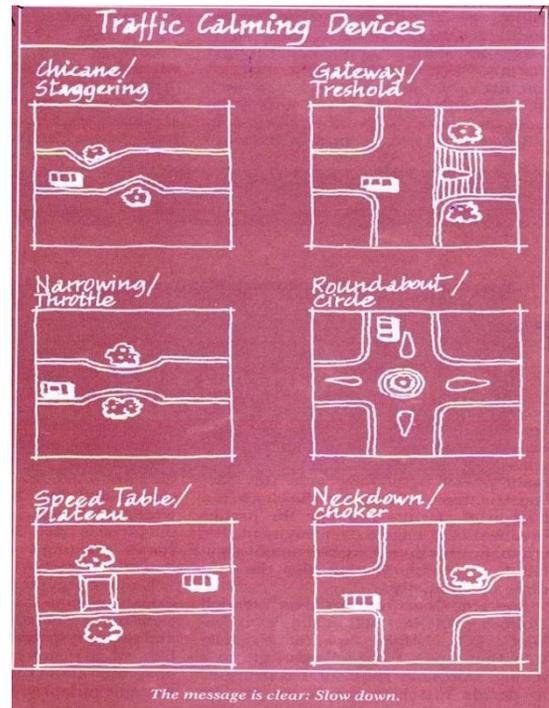
The SR 260 Growth Area discussed in the Growth Area Element is anchored at the intersection of SR 260 and Tyler Parkway. As this Growth Area develops, building a north/south local road to connect S. Sutton Road to Tyler Parkway will complete an important, light volume alternate route, through the eastern neighborhoods of Town, and would connect the north and south gateways of Town. These improvements would facilitate an ADOT alternate route for SR 87 and SR 260 running through the southeast corner of Town.

#5 - West-Side Alternate Route

With some additional traffic calming design measures, the minor arterial roads: Airport, Vista, and Country Club, in conjunction with the southern portion of McLane Road, were identified by the community as a viable alternate route for the western neighborhoods of Town. These minor arterials will serve as access routes to the Payson Airport Growth Area and the Main Street Growth Area, and from an ADOT alternate route for SR 87 if built west of Town.

Traffic Calming Investments

Traffic calming is a commitment to enforce traffic laws, and an investment in design to reduce speed, improve circulation, create shared streets, increase economic vibrancy, and protect the environment. The Town of Payson is not going to design away the automobile. The economy relies on visitors arriving to town by automobile, and data from the U.S. Census Bureau reports there are at least 1.73 vehicles per household in Payson. The *Goals and Strategies* presented in this General Plan diversify the options available to circulate safely within Town without an automobile. The developed portions of Payson are compact. The furthest development from the SR 87 and SR 260 intersection is less than five miles, on the current network of streets. The average pedestrian walks at a speed at or about 3 miles per hour, and casual cyclists will ride approximately 15 miles in an hour. Infrastructure improvements to increase on-



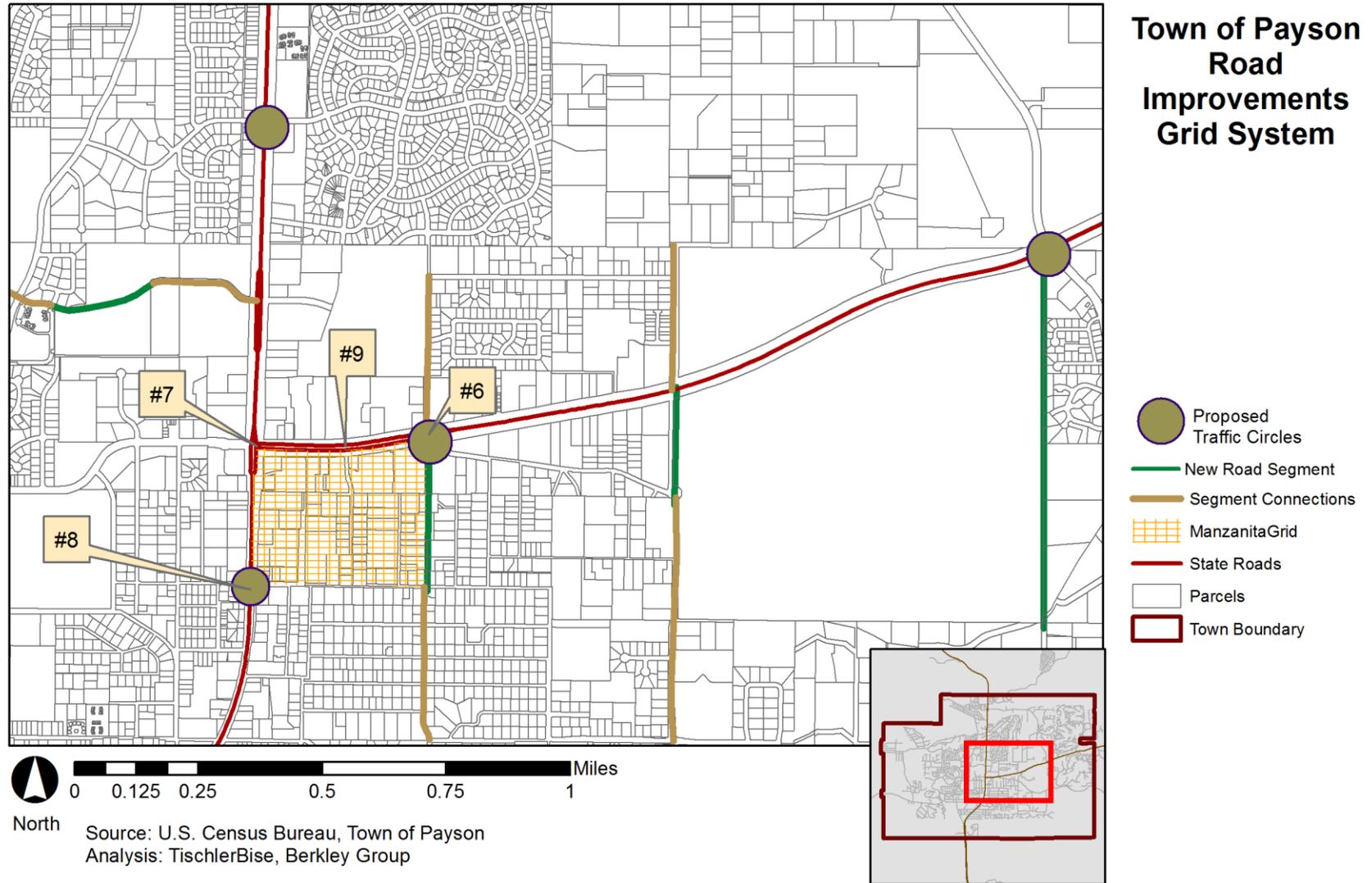
road and off-road bicycle trails will increase the opportunity for residents living furthest from the state roads intersection to access the commercial core in roughly half an hour. The district-centered development patterns discussed in the Growth Area Element will slowly draw appropriate commercial services to the mixed-use neighborhoods of Payson. These new developments will be served by sidewalks; and will provide opportunities for Town residents to access essential goods and services without the use of an automobile.

Adding sidewalks, painting on-road bicycle lanes, allowing and encouraging on-street parking, providing textured crosswalks in residential neighborhoods are all improvements that will be considered for Town neighborhoods to slow traffic and create safe routes for pedestrian circulation. The commercial corridors are well served by sidewalks, and investments to increase connections between commercial and residential areas will continue. Infill redevelopment along the commercial corridors will focus on removing at least some of the curb cuts, by encouraging hidden and/or shared parking, and direct traffic to common entrance and exit routes. An urban forest campaign will protect existing trees and encourage planting additional landscaping to define the travel lanes separate from the pedestrian and bicyclist areas.

Bonita and Manzanita Connection Grid

The intersection of SR 260 and Manzanita Drive (Marker #6 in Map 17, has the highest crash rate of any intersection in Town, according to the ADOT Study. Second highest is the intersection of SR 87 and SR 260 (Marker #7). There are also high crash rates where Bonita Street meets SR 87 (Marker #8), and where Goodnow Road meets SR 260 (Marker #9). The Town of Payson proposes incremental changes for the southeast corner of SR 87 and SR 260, bordered on the south by Bonita Drive and to the east by the proposed connection of North and South Manzanita Drive.

Map 17: Major Arterial Commercial Access



Traffic calming improvements recommended for this grid would include connecting North and South Manzanita Drive, and adding traffic circles at the SR 87/Bonita Drive, and SR 260/Manzanita Drive intersections, which would slow traffic and serve as gateways into the commercial district. There are 39 parcels of land, which front on either side of Hwy 87 and Hwy 260 between Bonita Drive and Manzanita Drive. Included in the redevelopment grid are 19 fronting parcels. If fully implemented, the redevelopment grid would reduce curb cuts along the major arterials by providing access from parallel-running frontage roads. The western portion of the redevelopment grid is part of the Beeline Highway mixed-use designation, as described in the Land Use Element. Parcels fronting on SR 260 are designated as Commercial. The southeast section of the grid is categorized as Multifamily Residential.

Multi-Modal System

Pedestrian Safety

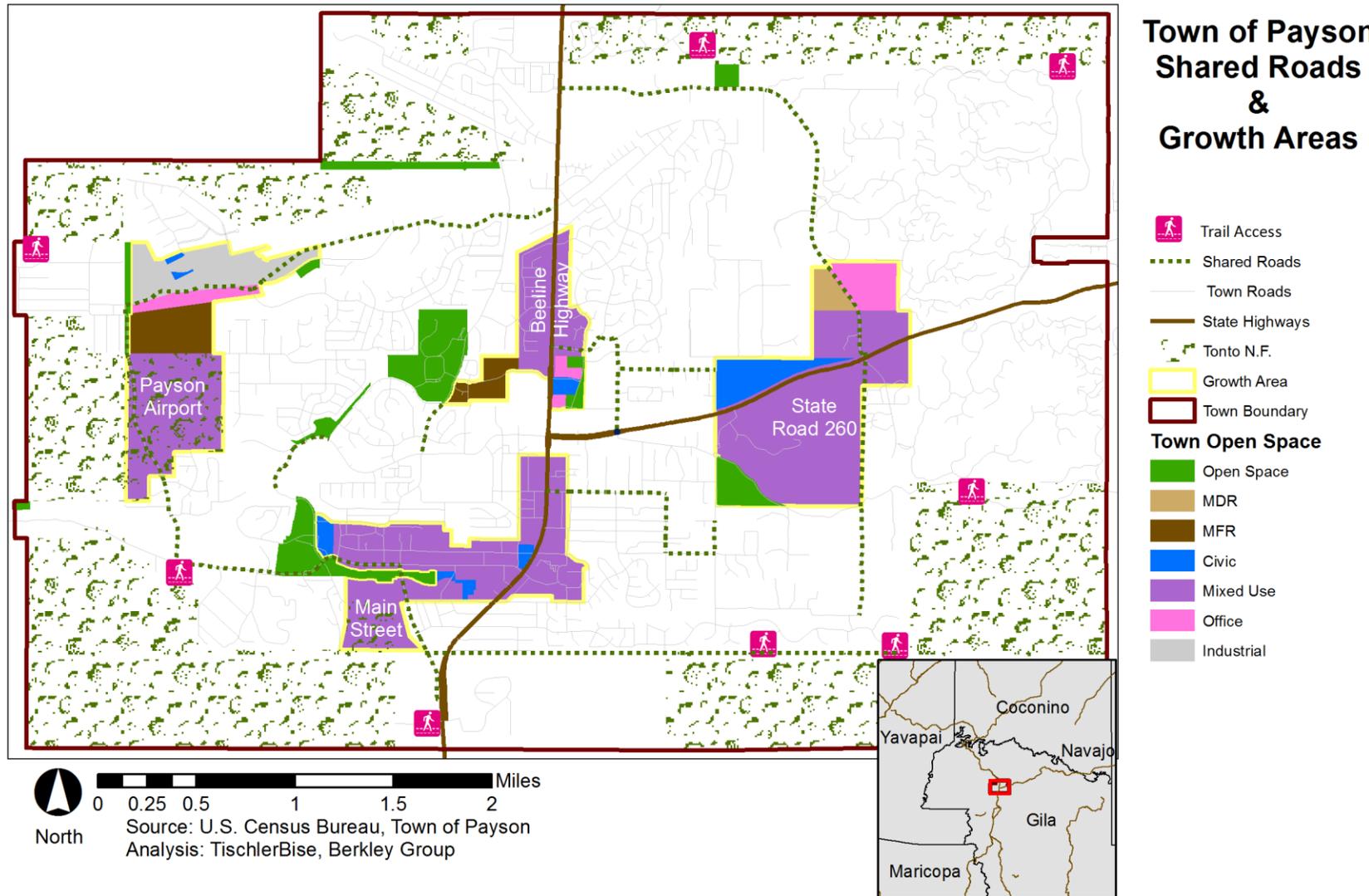
As Payson works toward a town-wide multi-modal transportation network pedestrian and bicyclist safety improvements to the residential streets are priorities. Both sides of the SR 87, SR 260, and Main Street commercial corridors are well served by sidewalks, as is the minor arterial S. McLane Road. Some collector roadways immediately off SR 87 provide sidewalks, but there is a clear disconnect between the commercial corridors and the residential neighborhoods that are not served by sidewalks.

On-Road Bicycle Lanes

Tonto National Forest has an extensive network of multi-use trails. There are eight trail access points at or within the Town of Payson municipal boundary; however, as discussed in the Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Element, these trails do not connect with an on-road or multi-use trail network within Town. Participants in the General Plan process expressed strong support for added investments in on-road sidewalks, and bicycle lane striping to seamlessly connect trail access points, open space, residential neighborhoods, commercial hubs, schools, and services.

Shown in **Map 18** is a collection of roads identified by the community as candidates for multi-modal transportation improvements to identify each as “shared roads.” Each road would host a mixture of pedestrian sidewalks and on-road bicycle lane striping to define the roadways, provide better multi-modal circulation and calm traffic.

Map 18: Shared Road Connections to Open Space and Growth Areas



8.4 GOALS AND STRATEGIES

8.4.1 Adopt and implement an annual Capital Improvements Plan

- 8.4.1.1 Incorporate highest local transportation priorities into the CIP
- 8.4.1.2 Use CIP process to educate the public on transportation, and other, Town priorities

8.4.2 Continue to be involved in ADOT's efforts to develop an alternate route to alleviate traffic congestion and infrastructure demands

- 8.4.2.1 Differentiate between Payson's visitor traffic stopping in Town on the way to natural resource recreation areas, and commercial traffic passing-through
- 8.4.2.2 Work with ADOT and U.S. Forest Service to design an alternative route that maximizes the use of federal land to prevent new commercial interchanges or strip development along the proposed route

8.4.3 Design and implement a gateway vision that encourages pass-through traffic to visit

- 8.4.3.1 Support the design of a trolley system to improvement in-Town connections
- 8.4.3.2 Transform existing commercial corridors to be pedestrian friendly
- 8.4.3.3 Reduce traffic speed through better design
- 8.4.3.4 Develop guidelines for landscaping major arterials and collector streets

8.4.4 Encourage non-motorized movement around town

- 8.4.4.1 Develop a town-wide network of trails and sidewalks, with the first priority to connect residential neighborhoods to commercial centers
- 8.4.4.2 Mitigate excessive vehicle miles traveled during peak visitor times with new infrastructure for connectivity and mobility for non-motorized transport
- 8.4.4.3 Identify and implement traffic calming design standards for all collector roads
- 8.4.4.4 Work with existing development to reduce the number of sidewalk curb-cuts
- 8.4.4.5 Provide additional signalized crosswalks along busy commercial corridors

8.4.5 Create a more unified look and feel to state-owned commercial corridors

- 8.4.5.1 Work with State and commercial stakeholders
- 8.4.5.2 Adopt a corridor overlay focused on building form, style, orientation, and massing
- 8.4.5.3 Ensure effective sign regulations adjacent to state-owned rights-of-way and in commercially zoned corridors

8.4.6 Provide transit service in town

- 8.4.6.1 Negotiate agreements with large employers to support a shuttle system
- 8.4.6.2 Partner with a higher education administration to implement Town-wide transit service

8.4.7 Increase pedestrian and bicyclist safety

- 8.4.7.1 Identify traffic calming improvements and develop a phased implementation plan
- 8.4.7.2 Identify specific off-road options and develop a funding plan

8.4.8 Implement previously adopted plans to improve the Town's transportation system

- 8.4.8.1 Develop a phasing and funding strategy to implement the 2009 Payson Airport Master Plan
- 8.4.8.2 Prioritize and incorporate the 2011 Payson Transportation Study recommendations into the annual CIP to implement the projects in a fiscally responsible manner