

MEMORIES OF THE SUN CITIES



TROLLEYS TRAVERSED SUN CITY

One of a series on the history of
Sun City and Sun City West, Arizona

Sun Cities Area Historical Society
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TROLLEYS TRAVERSED SUN CITY

In the early growing years of Sun City, public transportation was viewed more as a novelty than the necessity it has become for many of our residents who have given up driving.

In 1963, Del Webb put a trolley on the streets called the "Shop-Lifter." It carried residents and visitors from the Grand Shopping Center to stops around the neighborhood.

The Shop-Lifter was a 25-seat capacity open trailer, pulled by a Jeep. It was custom built, patterned after similar conveniences seen at such places as Disneyland. It was equipped with seats covered in all weather washable plastic and roofed over completely with a colorfully striped canvas canopy to afford passengers protection from the elements. The conveyance was equipped with passenger signals to indicate stops. The Shop-Lifter was discontinued after two years.

At a meeting of the Sun City Merchants Association on December 12, 1965, busline operator Arthur Lambert of Youngtown announced bus service would start in January. Soon a gleaming red and white, 18-seat "mini-bus" appeared on the scene. The bus was owned by DEVCO but leased to Lambert who had the bus franchise in Sun City.

Lambert said at the time, "The bus will make the rounds of Sun City every hour from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. six days a week. If there are enough requests we will do a Sunday run."

Bus signs were to be erected every 1,200 feet along the streets. Monthly tickets were \$2.00. A single ride anywhere in town cost 25 cents.

In 1969 the popular van was replaced by a new and larger Bluebird bus freshly painted in Sun City colors and sunburst. It had tinted windows, a chime system for disembarking passengers, 34-inch-wide plush seats and stainless steel handrails.

Sun Valley Lodge nurse, Margaret Steffek, the first person to climb on board the new bus, was given a life-time pass. Mrs. Steffek would walk one-half mile to board the bus at 107th and Peoria avenues to ride to her job at the lodge.

Bus driver Tony Far brightened the already colorful bus with his cheerfulness, and passengers could count on him for a smile as he helped them on and off with their packages. Far occasionally strayed from the designated route to drop a handicapped passenger off at his or her door.

Although the buses were vital for those who needed transportation, there were not enough riders to make it a profitable operation. DEVCO had been subsidizing the service and with the company phasing out in Sun City, the bus service was stopped on June 30, 1982.

The Red Cross and Easter Seal Society operated vans for persons with medical appointments and for shoppers only when space permitted.

In the meantime Del Webb contracted the Molley Corp. of Scottsdale to initiate the Molley Trolley for a five-month period. The Molley Trolley was an open air vehicle, a colorful replica of late 1800's street-cars.

Two trolleys, "Molly" and "Dolly" gave residents free shuttles between shopping centers and businesses every 30 minutes from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays. Cost of the service was borne by merchants who bought advertising on the sides of the trolleys.

The trolley service stopped for the summer after a five-months run, and was intermittent thereafter until it was eventually ended.

In May, 1982 the Sun Cities Area Transit System (SCAT) adopted articles of incorporation and started service in September 1982.

TRAFFIC

Finding more police coverage for Sun Cities

By Rusty Bradshaw
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Sun Cities residents want more police presence in their communities might be getting it, but not in the form of more Maricopa County Sheriff's Office deputies.

Reporting on a community leaders' meeting, Pam Schwartz, Sun City Home

Owners Association board president, said MCSO officials told the group there would be more patrols coming to the Sun Cities. As Maricopa County islands, the Sun Cities are totally dependent on the MCSO and Maricopa County Department of Transportation for the maintenance and up-

keep of community roads.

However, MCSO officials caution residents from believing the sheriff's office will be adding deputies to District 3, which covers the Sun Cities.

"We are not adding patrols, but I am seeking to distribute our contingent of

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deputy sheriffs to better manage call volume and equalize the workload among the law enforcement officers," Capt. Paul Chagolla, MCSO District 3 commander, stated in an email.

His efforts are coming ahead of MCSO's annual shift bid, a method of distributing officers within the county and the separate MCSO districts. Mr. Chagolla is reviewing District 3's existing deployment model, searching for ways to maximize coverage with the current allocation of staff.

"In short, no changes have been implemented, but the current deployment model may change after the shift bid is initiated and implemented," Mr. Chagolla stated. "It is only strategy to better service communities in the Northwest quadrant."

Mr. Chagolla stated District 3 personnel includes one captain, three lieutenants, 14 sergeants, two administrative staff and 60 deputies. District 3 stretches from I-17 west to La Paz County line and from the Yavapai County line south to Northern Avenue, an area covering 1,600 square miles. District 3 is the second largest

of MCSO's seven districts, including the Lake Patrol division.

Sun Cities residents have long advocated for additional police coverage in the communities where crime and traffic issues are at uncomfortable levels for residents. Some blame non-residents for most of those problems and believe additional MCSO patrols will solve the issues.

Dave Polling, PORA Roads, Traffic and Safety Committee member disagrees — at least in regards to speeding vehicles.

"Maricopa County Sheriff's Office and Sun City West Posse statistics clearly show that the vast majority of those exceeding the limits have an 85375 home address," he stated in a guest commentary ("Taking a look at speeding in Sun City West," Sun City West Independent, Oct. 25, 2017).

He also stated MCSO and the Sun City West Posse have statistics showing more than 90 percent of accidents in Sun City West are not caused by speeding but by some kind of erratic, improper behavior at various community intersections.



Paul Chagolla

"Getting passed by someone who is driving 55 or greater is annoying as hell, but the evidence is that behavior is not causing accidents," he stated. "The accidents that physically

hurt our residents are generally caused by some driver using bad judgment, failing to be patient or simply failing to obey existing traffic laws."

Sun City West resident V. Koll disagrees. A 20-year resident, he believes there are too many drivers exceeding 45-55 mph on the community's major thoroughfares, including R.H. Johnson and Meeker boulevards.

"My fear is for safety of the golf cars, walkers, strollers and safe drivers," he stated in a letter to the editor ("Poling right on point on speeding," Sun City West Independent, Nov. 1, 2017).

He believes county leaders should provide more funding for additional deputies.

Sun City West resident Brian Reilly expected some changes when Paul Penzone defeated former sheriff Joe Arpaio in the 2016 election. But so far he is disappointed.

"Nothing has changed when it comes to traffic en-

forcement in Sun City West," he stated in a letter to the editor ("Sun City West needs traffic enforcement," Sun City West Independent, Nov. 8, 2017).

Mr. Reilly and Jim Powell, Sun City Home Owners Association Roads and Safety Committee chairman, believe there are not enough traffic patrols in the Sun Cities. Mr. Chagolla explained Sun City is covered by three beat deputies in three patrol areas, roughly corresponding with Sun City's three phases (Phase 1 south of Grand Avenue, Phase 2 between Grand Avenue and Bell Road and Phase 3 north of Bell Road). Sun City West is covered by one beat deputy. But Mr. Powell, who was an officer in law enforcement prior to his retirement, has long maintained there is not a designated deputy for traffic enforcement.

"We have 14.5 square miles in Sun City," Mr. Powell said. Sun City West includes 10.8 square miles.

Mr. Reilly believes on a given day MCSO officials should temporarily pull deputies from other areas to try to overcome the traffic hazards in Sun City West.

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Sun City residents have something of an advantage in that Youngtown officials several years ago disbanded its police department and contracted with MCSO for law enforcement services. There is a branch substation in Youngtown for MCSO patrol deputies, providing a little more coverage and faster response times for situations near 111th Avenue, the divid-

ing line between Sun City and Youngtown.

Mr. Powell, though, believes increased crime and traffic issues are a product of growth.

"We are no longer an isolated community," he said. "We have this urban sprawl now surrounding us and that brings more crime and traffic."

He is concerned the Sun City Posse's transition away from MCSO's umbrella will eliminate a deterrent to crime and traffic issues be-

cause Posse cars will no longer look like MCSO vehicles.

Ms. Schwartz believes the Sun City Posse's transition will not affect the deterrent factor.

"They are getting more recruits and getting them out on the street faster," she said during the Nov. 28 SCHOA board meeting. "For those who believe it will be less of a deterrent, that is not the case."

Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@newszap.com.

PANHANDLERS

Addressing safety in medians

Phoenix, Surprise have restrictive ordinances

By Rusty Bradshaw
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A man is patrolling the raised median on the south

side of the intersection of Grand and 107th avenues in Sun City.

With traffic flowing briskly in the eastbound lanes of Grand Avenue, a small SUV stops in the No. 3 Grand Avenue lane next to the median just outside the intersection. The driver talks to the panhandler for a few minutes, then

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What are your opinions on this issue?

Send responses to rbradshaw@newszap.com.

gets out and goes to the back of the vehicle, opens the hatchback and gives the panhandler something. They talk for a few more minutes before the driv-

er gets back in her vehicle and drives away.

All the while, eastbound drivers in the No. 3 lane on Grand Avenue must adjust into the No. 2 lane to avoid the stopped vehicle, some honking as they go by. Then the southbound 107th Avenue left-turn signal goes on and drivers making the turn must jump

to the no. 2 lane to avoid the stopped SUV.

At the intersection of Bell Road and Loop 101, panhandlers are often times on the medians on both sides of the freeway overpass. At times there are panhandlers on all four raised medians at the intersection of Bell Road and

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A panhandler tries to get donations from drivers at the intersection of Bell Road and Loop 101. Street beggars in the raised medians of busy Northwest Valley roadways is raising safety concerns. [Rusty Bradshaw/Independent Newsmedia file photo]

Safety

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83rd Avenue. Panhandlers have also been spotted on the raised medians at the intersections of Bell and Reems Road in Surprise and Grand Avenue and Meeker Boulevard in Sun City West.

While panhandling was determined to be a protected First Amendment right, residents and officials are becoming more concerned about the safety issues involved on the raised medians of high volume roadways. Sun City Home Owners Association officials believe municipalities and the county should write ordinances to keep panhandlers off the raised medians. Jim Powell, SCHOA Roads and Safety Committee chairman believes this can be done without denying people their First Amendment rights.

"This is a real safety hazard, with the possibility of people getting hit by vehicles," he said during a meeting last month. "And there is one guy who is always at the Grand and 107th intersection that gets quite vocal and maybe even violent with people if they don't give him anything."

Mr. Powell believes the panhandlers on the medians can also distract drivers trying to read their signs, trying not to clip the panhandler accidentally or trying to avoid a confrontation.

In fact, some Valley cities have already taken action with ordinances. Phoenix was the first in 2014 with its ordinance 36-128 that prohibits people from being on any raised median unless they are in a crosswalk waiting for traffic to clear.

"Our cities and the county

should be looking to see how that has gone for Phoenix, whether it has had any challenges through the courts," Mr. Powell said.

Surprise officials also added to their traffic ordinances to address the issue, according to Diane Arthur, Surprise public information officer.

"The city of Surprise has an ordinance which prohibits a person from stopping on a painted or raised traffic island or median, except to wait to safely cross the roadway," she stated in an email.

The Surprise ordinance is similar to the one created by Phoenix officials. However, the ordinance is designed only to preempt safety issues, not to eliminate panhandling in the city, according to Ms. Arthur.

"The city would not be able to pass any ordinance prohibiting (panhandling) activity," she stated.

Ms. Arthur added city officials are not aware of any injuries related to panhandlers on medians.

Maricopa County officials have not had any discussion on additional ordinances addressing raised medians, according to Scott Isham, District 4 Supervisor Clint Hickman's chief of staff.

"Maricopa County Sheriff's Office has done a pretty good job of going out if there is an issue on the corners," he said.

While Grand Avenue goes through Sun City, Surprise and skirts Sun City West, it is not within county jurisdiction, according to Mr. Isham.

"On Grand it's a DPS issue for those medians," he said.

Glendale officials at this time have had no discussions about removing street beggars from medians or restricting their

access to medians, according to Scott Waite, Glendale Police Department public information sergeant.

"While being in a median does bring a level of safety concerns, we would encourage them to exercise their rights with due regard and safety in mind," he stated in an email.

Peoria officials and District 21 Sen. Debbie Lesko (R-Peoria) did not respond by press time to Independent's request for comment on the matter.

While no other Northwest Valley entity has ordinances to address people in the raised or painted medians, cities across the country are beginning to, according to Mr. Powell. He shared information about such ordinances in Long Beach (September 2017), Sacramento, Yuba City, Citrus Heights, Laguna Woods, Merced and Santa Cruz (2010-2014), all in California; Colorado Springs, Colorado (2017); Madison, Wisconsin (2017); Omaha, Nebraska (2017); and Houston, Texas (2017).

"This is not just an issue for us, it's an issue all over the country," Mr. Powell said.

Some municipal officials encourage residents to make their donations to more established charities.

"The city encourages residents to donate directly to their charities of choice, in lieu of handing out money to people they encounter on the street," Ms. Arthur said. "That way people that need support can connect with the agencies that can help them through a variety of means, including access to food, job skills and housing."

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TRANSPORTATION

Transportation tribulations

Some seniors may feel or be stranded in the Sun Cities.

By Matt Roy

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Following the July 1 rollout of Valley Metro's Paratransit services through its new provider, Transdev, complaints about the service have been reported in some parts of the West Valley.

Kathy Chandler, Northwest Valley Connect executive director, said the change of provider has also affected her agency, which had to step up operations earlier this year when the Sun City West Foundation terminated its free ride service, which helped landlocked Sun City West seniors connect to local mass transit.

"I don't think Transdev was prepared for the amount of area they had to cover in Surprise, the Sun Cities and the West Valley," said Ms. Chandler.

She said NWC has received numerous calls from concerned riders, who complained about scheduling inflexibility, long waits and missed connections. Some even reported being stranded by no-shows.

"One client calls us for after hours and weekends," Ms. Chandler explained. "She said she got stranded at the doctor's office and someone there had to get her an Uber."

Reports of problems with Dial-A-Ride were more frequent at the start of July. Since then, NWC has received fewer complaints. But that may not be all good news

yet, Ms. Chandler suggested.

"That was in the first few weeks in July and we have not seen as many of those now," she said. "Now, some are just being told they can't book a ride."

Ron Brooks, Valley Metro accessible services manager, acknowledged the difficulties and said they are taking steps to fix the problem.

"Service began with a new provider and new staff on July 1. During the first week, staff made errors which caused some very late service," Mr. Brooks stated by email. "We implemented daily meetings to identify, prioritize and resolve issues and our providers brought in experts from other paratransit systems across the country. As service has improved, the instances have decreased."

Putting the challenge into perspective, he explained Valley Metro Paratransit provides around 10,000 trips each week across a 1,200-square-mile area. Since Transdev took over, despite the difficulties, service times have steadily improved.

"Last week, more than 80 percent of trips were provided on time," Mr. Brooks stated. "We are confident that we will soon reach our target of more than 90 percent of trips being on time."

Valley Metro officials have also increased call center staffing, with the goal of reducing hold times to two minutes or less for 90 percent of calls. Later this year, the company will implement technology enhancements, which will allow riders to book, check on and cancel trips on the phone, online or by smart phone application,

GET INVOLVED

Group: Northwest Valley Connect
Needs: Volunteer drivers, call center operators, office workers and community ambassadors
Contact: Call 623-282-9300, email info@northwestvalleyconnect.org or visit www.northwestvalleyconnect.org

Mr. Brooks stated.

"We will also be introducing automatic phone, email or text notifications to let riders know when their vehicle is about to arrive," he added. "In the meantime, we will continue to work with our provider to ensure the best possible service throughout Surprise, the Sun Cities and everywhere we operate."

Ms. Chandler said she does not question Valley Metro's efforts or motives.

"They're really are committed to making this work and I'm sure they are sincere," she said. "They have the experience to make this work, but maybe just didn't have everything in place. I'm sure they will. It's just going to take some time."

Transdev now stages some vehicles and supervisors in the West Valley to provide service when additional short-notice resources are needed. The company is also working with a subcontractor, AAA Transportation, to increase coverage in the area, Mr. Brooks explained.

According to Valley Metro's website, AAA Transportation will operate sedans as well as wheelchair-accessible vans. Their drivers are required to meet the same minimum standards as Trans-



Rich Greene, Northwest Valley Connect volunteer and fleet manager, helps a rider onto a van. Mr. Greene, a Sun City resident, works 40 hours per week volunteering there and at his church, according to Kathy Chandler, NWC executive director and mobility manager. [Submitted photo]

dev drivers.

Ms. Chandler said she is talking with Transdev officials about a plan to house some of their vehicles at a fenced parking lot at the NWC office, which could foster faster service and more flexibility in the West Valley. Her agency is trying to help fill the service gaps, but they rely on volunteers, many of whom are only seasonal residents.

"We're trying to help as many people as we can," she said. "It's August and we have drivers on vacation and we're having a hard time. We are looking for volunteers to help us cover these trips."

Volunteers are needed in a variety of roles at NWC, including drivers, call center operators, office assistants and community ambassadors, who give presentations about the agency to home-



Northwest Valley Connect Executive Director and Mobility Manager Kathy Chandler answers phones at the nonprofit agency. She said the agency needs volunteers, especially in August, when many seasonal residents who volunteer are still out of town. [Submitted photo]

owners associations, service organizations and clubs. The nonprofit group also relies on donations from the community.

Call 623-282-9300, email info@northwestvalleycon

northwestvalleyconnect.org or visit www.northwestvalleyconnect.org to get involved.

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SC Traffic

SUN CITY INDEPENDENT

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yourwestvalley.com

SAFETY

REDUCING ROAD RAGE

Panel shares plans to make Sun Cities streets safer

By Matt Roy

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

During a meeting occasionally dominated by shouts of anger and frustration, a gallery of Sun City West residents raised concerns about traffic safety.

A group of nearly a dozen showed up to speak at the Roads, Traffic and Safety Forum March 22 at PORA in Sun City West. The main issue voiced by attendees was road safety, especially for golf car drivers.

"I think it's very dangerous," said Sun City West resident Robert Baron. "This community was designed as a golf community."

Increased traffic and confusing striping on key roadways in the community create a risky environment for golf car drivers, with motorists in the neighborhood regularly following too close and

often using left turn lanes as passing lanes, he said.

Sun City West resident Larry Mendelsohn echoed that concern.

"Two years ago I was hit on Camino and very seriously hurt," Mr. Mendelsohn said.

He was driving a car, waiting to make a left turn, when another driver trying to pass in the left lane collided with his vehicle. He blamed the way the stripes are applied to roads in the community.

"On Camino between R.H. Johnson and Beardsley, it's too narrow for lines like that. There is a hazard I believe, it's scary," he added.

The issue is not limited to Sun City West, as Sun City faces similar problems.

Mary Heiser, Sun City Pose commander, agreed traffic safety is a problem in the community.

"A golf car is not a car," she said. "They shouldn't be driving them as if they are cars. When they turn corners going too fast, some of them flip over. I think that is a major issue."



Sun City resident Bill Pearson drives his golf car daily throughout the community. County officials are working on plans to improve traffic safety in the Sun Cities, for motorist as well as pedestrians, cyclists and those utilizing alternative transportation modes. [Independent Newsmedia/Matt Roy]

The roads committee at PORA and a similar committee of the Sun City Home Owners Association comprises a diverse group of agencies, with representatives from the community, PORA, PRIDES, Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, the Arizona Department

of Transportation and Maricopa County Department of Transportation.

John Counts, a senior civil engineer for MCDOT, responded to the Sun City West crowd's consternation.

The road striping in some locations was changed several years ago to try and re-

duce incidents of side swiping. The change came only after residents complained about the problem and petitioned for change, he said. Similar road striping, specifically along 103rd Avenue north of Grand Avenue, stop signs in traffic lanes on 103rd

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Avenue south of Grand Avenue and “no parking” exception signs on 11th Avenue, were also done in Sun City at resident requests.

Mr. Counts looked into records of Sun City West golf car accidents going back to 2010 and his search turned up only one accident during that time along Granite Valley Drive, one on 151st Avenue and another on Williams Road. Camino del Sol had three reported accidents in that time, he said.

MCDOT continues to study road conditions in the Sun Cities, Mr. Counts added.

MCDOT plan

Following the public comments, agency representatives offered hope for improved safety.

“We’re in the process of creating a new Active Transportation Plan,” said Bryan Pahia, a public information officer for MCDOT.

His agency is working to identify needs for bikers and pedestrians in the community, as well as those using alternative modes of transportation, he said. According to a handout he presented, MCDOT needs the public’s help

IF YOU GO

What: SCHOA Roads and Safety Committee

When: 10 a.m. Wednesday, April 19 at

Where: Meeting room at SCHOA office, 10401 W. Coggins Drive



Bryan Pahia

to develop and implement the plan. “MCDOT is interested in your input and is currently developing an interactive map and other materials to receive comments,” according to the postcard-sized flyer. He urged public attendance at the next roads committee meetings in both communities. The Sun City West committee next meets 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 19 at the PORA office, 13815 Camino del Sol, while the SCHOA Roads and Safety Committee meets 10 a.m. Wednesday, April 19 at the SCHOA office, 10401 W. Coggins Drive.

MCDOT spokeswoman Nicole Moon expanded on what attendees can expect at the meetings.



Nicole Moon

related to the Active Transportation Plan. Residents will also be given an opportunity to provide input at the meeting and after the meeting via the interactive web map,” she said in a prepared statement.

Sun Cities residents who want to provide input for the plan can contact Reed Kempton, a senior planner for MCDOT, at 602-506-7742 or reedkempton@mail.maricopa.gov. The agency will also be launching a new website to garner public input.

Posse improvements

John Merkel, representing the Sheriff’s Posse of Sun City West on the panel, reported the organization has seen a breakthrough, which will increase the presence of their volunteers on the streets.

“A significant group of our posse just got their intermediate training done,” Mr. Merkel said.

“A representative from MCDOT’s systems planning branch will provide an overview of the purpose, need and process

As has been reported (“Added training makes Posse recruits hesitant,” Sun City West Independent, Jan. 25, 2017), the posses in the Sun Cities have seen their ranks decimated by regulations and restrictions imposed by District Judge G. Murray Snow in the wake of a racial profiling case against Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office.

As of January, Sun City West only had four volunteers certified to direct traffic out of nearly 100 members. In the past, Posse members had been able to manage traffic around roadway incidents while waiting for MCSO deputies to arrive.

Since that time, MCSO has begun offering some of the required coursework at locations in the Sun Cities, making it easier for volunteers to attend and complete the courses. Mr. Merkel said nearly half of the Sun City West patrolling posse are about to get their certification, having completed the required coursework. They are now only waiting on the county to finish the paperwork.

Mary Heiser, Sun City Posse commander, said her organization has also seen



Mary Heiser

training improvements over the past months.

“We do have about 25 that will be ready to go back out into the

streets (for traffic control) as soon as MCSO lets us,” she said. “We have completed all of the intermediate training”

More MCSO patrols

Capt. Paul Chagolla, MCSO District 3, said the Sheriff’s Office will be increasing patrols in the Sun Cities to specifically address traffic safety, as had been previously reported (“Road work, enforcement addressed,” Sun City Independent, March 22, 2107).

By allocating more patrols in the Sun Cities, MCSO leaders plan to hand out more citations for speeding and dangerous driving. Deputies will also collect community-specific data to help deputies know where to focus their efforts, Mr. Chagolla said.

He explained more about their plans by email after the Sun Cities committee meetings.

“Sun City, Sun City West



Paul Chagolla

and Youngtown will experience increased traffic enforcement in locations where there are frequent traffic collisions, and where speeding, stop light or stop sign violations are prevalent,” he stated. “However, for the purposes of the traffic enforcement assignments, the number of deputies providing the extra enforcement will vary according to data reviews.”

In Sun City, increased patrols will soon focus on 99th Avenue between Union Hills Drive and Grand Avenue and along Bell Road between 99th and 114th avenues. In Sun City West, enforcement will focus on R.H. Johnson between Grand Avenue and Bell Road, according to Mr. Chagolla.

After that, MCSO will increase patrolling in Youngtown, especially near school bus stops and along Agua Fria Ranch Parkway, he added.

Matt Roy can be reached at 623-876-2528 or mroy@newszap.com. Continue the discussion at www.yourwestvalley.com.

SC Traffic

REGULATIONS

Keeping streets clear

Proposed legislation could limit HOAs' purview

By Rusty Bradshaw
SPECIAL TO INDEPENDENT NEWS MEDIA

An East Valley legislator wants to put a stop to HOAs regulating parking in their communities, but his proposed law may have little af-

fect in the West Valley. Arizona Sen. John Kavanaugh (R-Fountain Hills) introduced Senate Bill 1240, attempting to amend Section 33-1818 of Arizona Revised Statutes that prohibits associations from regulating public roadways, to include all planned communities in the state. Current law only restricts those communities established after Dec. 31, 2014.



John Kavanaugh



Art Jenkins

Mr. Kavanaugh believes private associations should not be allowed to regulate traffic rules on public roadways.

IF YOU GO

What: Sun Cities Legislative Forum
When: 8 a.m., Friday, Feb. 24
Where: Palmbrook Country Club, 9350 W. Greenway Road, Sun City

not affect those planned communities that own their own roadways.

"I respect the HOAs that own their own streets," Mr. Kavanaugh said. "But for the others, the rules and regulations should come from the municipal body."

These and other legislative matters will be the topic of discussion during the first

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Streets

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Sun Cities legislative forum 8 a.m. Friday, Feb. 24 at Palmbrook Country Club, 9350 W. Greenway Road, Sun City.

While the Sun City Home Owners Association opposes the bill, it may have little affect in the age restricted community. Mr. Kavanaugh's bill includes a clause that allows HOAs the authority to regulate parking within their codes, covenants and restrictions if "the governmental entity has formally granted that authority to the association."

Because the Sun Cities are unincorporated areas of Maricopa County, the county is the governmental entity with jurisdiction in those communities. Maricopa County officials designated SCHOA as the entity to enforce Sun City CC&Rs, and made PORA that designee in Sun City West.

"Counties generally do not establish parking restrictions within these unincorporated areas," stated Carole Studdard, SCHOA marketing director, in an email blast to residents urging them to contact their legislators to oppose SB 1240.

The only parking regulate is Sun City's CC&Rs is limiting all vehicles, especially RVs, to 72 consecutive hours parked either next to the curb on the street or in owners' driveways, according to Art Jenkins, SCHOA board member and former Posse commander.

Pam Schwartz, SCHOA board president, said the agency was researching possible variances for caregivers.

Mr. Kavanaugh said if municipal entity officials who have given associations authority to regulate parking believe the association is abusing that authority, it

can be removed.

Jim Powell, SCHOA Roads and Safety Committee chairman last month asked if there was a way for county code enforcement officers to address other parking issues, including parking on the sidewalk and the wrong side of the street. Mr. Jenkins said Posse members used to, as a matter of course, address the problem when they saw it.

"When I was with the Posse we would knock on doors and ask people if that was their vehicle," he explained. "Most people thought they were doing a good thing (by parking on the sidewalk) because they were making room for traffic on the street."

PORA of Sun City West President Rob Robbins in an email statement said his organization is studying this year's bill and the effects, if passed, they may have on the Sun City West Community.

"The Board of Directors of PORA have formed a subcommittee to review the proposed senate bills, SB 1240 is just one of the bills," Mr. Robbins stated. "At this time, it is uncertain how SB 1240 will affect our community."

The PORA subcommittee will work with other HOA groups in assessing the affects and take appropriate steps to communicate affects in Sun City West to legislators.

"We live in very unique communities and have worked hard over the years to make them that way," Mr. Robbins stated. "It is very important for our residents to attend the legislative forum and voice their concerns."

Editor's Note: Matt Roy contributed to this story.

Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@newszap.com. Continue the discussion at www.yourwestvalley.com.

Traffic

Signs

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written request to MCDOT leadership and Clint Hickman, Maricopa County District 4 supervisor.

Residents believe the signs create confusion for drivers and, therefore, are a safety hazard.

"People come up to those signs and, because the streets are wider than standard, they believe it marks a two-lane street," said Don Thompson, Sun City Home Owners Association board member.

There are stop signs in the middle of the travel lane northbound and southbound on 103rd Avenue, in addition to signs on the northwest and southeast corners of the intersection. The street also includes wedge-shaped white lines leading from the signs back toward oncoming traffic. While it, and other Sun City roadways, was built wider than standard 12-foot lane streets, 103rd Avenue is a single travel lane in each direction, according to Mike Alberston, MCDOT project manager.

Mr. Thompson suggested moving the stop signs to the center line of the street. However, Mr. Albertson believes that will create more of a safety issue.

"People tend to go over the double yellow lines and the signs will get hit," he explained.

SCHOA officials, in a motion approved at their Nov. 15 board meeting, hope to resolve the issue simply by having the signs in the travel lanes removed, with the corner signs remaining, keeping the intersection as a four-way stop.

Resident Bob Held is also concerned about stop signs on the access road that parallels the east side of 111th Avenue. Vehicles going west on Connecticut Avenue routinely run the stop sign because they see no traffic on the access road.

"My wife and I take our lives in our hands when we are in that area," he said during the Nov. 16 Roads and Safety Committee meeting. "I've seen passenger cars, commercial vehicles, fire department vehicles, county trucks and MCSO vehicles

run that stop sign."

Jim Powell, SCHOA board and committee member, agreed. He and the Helds live near the Connecticut and 111th avenues intersection.

"We have the same problem at Florida (Avenue and 111th Avenue)," he said.

Mr. Held said he has requested a speed bump and lettering on the street indicating a stop, but MCDOT officials rejected both requests. He offered a third option at the committee meeting.

"Youngtown, at Tennessee Avenue, has flashing lights on that stop sign," he said. "MCDOT should do that here also."

Mr. Powell agreed the flashing lights would serve as a reminder to drivers there is a stop sign there and they need to obey it.

Resident Jim Stark suggested MCDOT officials consider installing the lights if residents paid for the equipment.

Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@newszap.com. Continue the discussion at www.yourwestvalley.com.

PUBLIC SAFETY

SCHOA calls for sign changes

Residents also concerned about 111th Avenue location

By Rusty Bradshaw
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Sun City Home Owners Association Board of Directors put its weight behind a request to remove four stop signs on 103rd Avenue in the community's phase one.

After hearing SCHOA Roads and Safety Committee and residents requests in October, Maricopa County Department of Transportation officials agreed to study the options to change the look of four-way stop intersections on 103rd Avenue at Alabama Avenue and Sun City Boulevard. The SCHOA board upped the ante with a

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yourwestvalley.com

CONSTRUCTION

DRIVER PATIENCE BEING TESTED

Intersection completion pushed back to January

By Rusty Bradshaw
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Driver frustration is mounting over reconstruction of the Union Hills Drive and 99th Avenue intersection.

The Maricopa County of Transportation Department project was scheduled to be completed in early October. That deadline was missed because of unexpected delays and is now pushed back to January, according to Nicole Moon, MCDOT spokeswoman.

"We had some utilities that took extra time to complete," she explained. "While that work was done, our main contractor concentrated their personnel and equipment at other job sites."

MCDOT contractors are extending box culverts along 99th Avenue to create dedicated left turn lanes, similar to ones at 99th Avenue and Palmeras Drive, and widening the roadways. This work is designed to improve capacity and safety at the intersection, ac-



Construction work was stopped through the end of October at the Union Hills Drive and 99th Avenue intersection while utility conflicts were resolved. The work stoppage delayed completion of the project, which has caused some frustration by drivers and businesses in the area.

According to Ms. Moon. A right-hand northbound turn lane will also be added on 99th Avenue. Crews are also upgrading the traffic signal, sidewalks and sidewalk ramps, she added.

"I frequent that intersection at various times of the day and even late evening/night and there is little or no work being done," resident Diane Guzman said. "I think the compa-

ny heading up this project has other job sites they would rather be working at and the only thing I noticed recently is the heavy equipment on the northeast corner has been re-

moved."

MCDOT's main contractor, under agreement with Recreation Centers of Sun City, parked its equipment in the

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Intersection

» From page 1

Marinette Recreation Center, 9860 W. Union Hills Drive, parking lot. RCSC officials did ask the equipment be moved due to a pickleball tournament creating need for the parking spaces.

"But that was made at the time they were going to move it anyway, so that worked out quite well," Ms. Moon said.

Resident Bob Kotwa is also frustrated with the lack of progress.

"It seems that the construction work at the intersection of 99th Avenue and Union Hills Drive has become a career for the contractor," he stated in an email to MCDOT officials. "Several days per week there is no work performed. the project has lasted forever. while your project lists completion in the fall and there is still a lot of work to be completed."

He wondered if there was any county oversight of the

project or if there was a penalty for the contractor if work is not completed on time.

"Seems an overpass over Grand Avenue or a freeway can be completed quicker than this intersection project," he stated.

However, Ms. Moon said the work at the intersection is in the final stages, with MCDOT's general contractor only needing to do the actual street paving work.

"They have completed the box culvert construction," she said.

After finding utility conflicts at the intersection, MCDOT officials and their contractor worked with utility companies to resolve them, according to Ms. Moon.

"Our contractor will be back on site in November and we expect the work will be complete in January," she told Sun



Nicole Moon



Jim Fox

City Home Owners Association Roads and Safety Committee members Oct. 26.

Jim Fox, Sun City fire

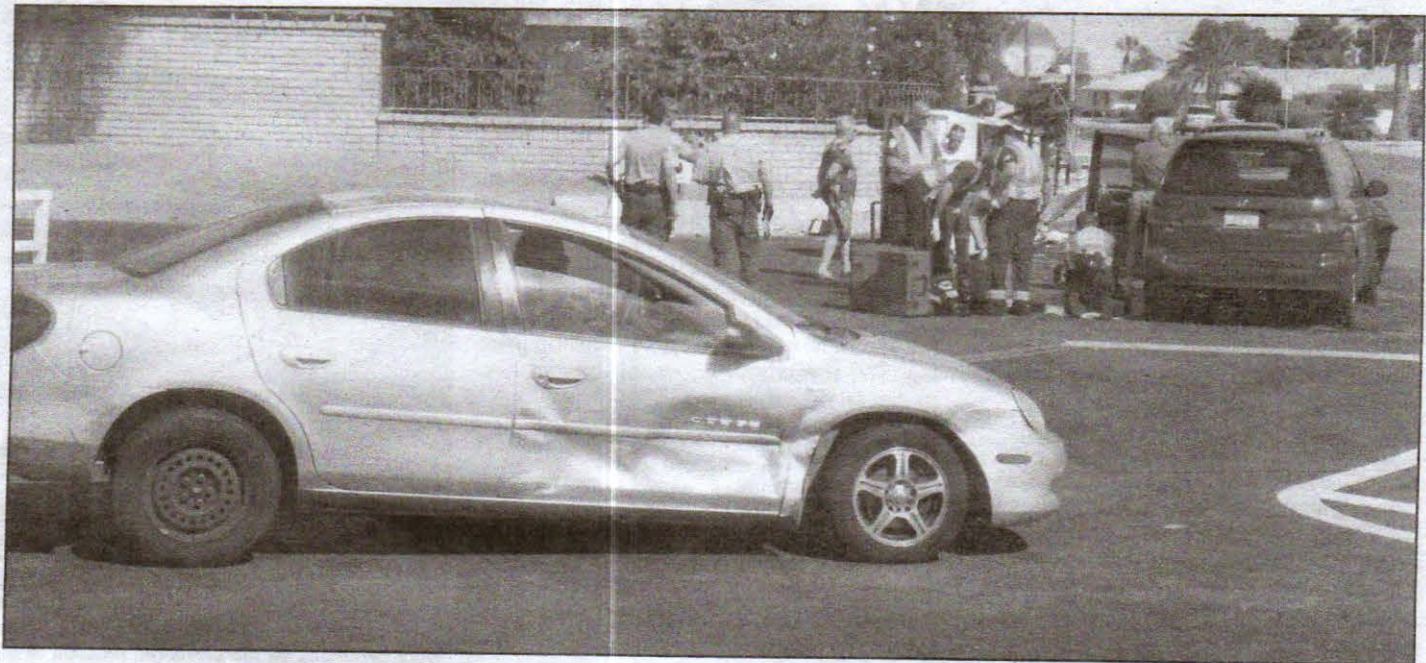
marshal, said he was told there was another conflict in the middle of the intersection that would delay the work further. He also said contractor representatives wanted to close the entire intersection to resolve that issue. Fire district officials oppose such a move.

"That intersection handles a lot of traffic for our emergency equipment," he said.

However, Ms. Moon said no such additional conflict exists. She also said there are no plans to close the intersection to emergency vehicle traffic.

"We have told our contractor that if the intersection is closed, they have to provide access for emergency vehicles," she said.

VFSC Traffic



This 2012 collision at 99th Avenue and Cameo Drive, involving three vehicles, was one of 17 accidents at the intersection included in the MCDOT traffic study. The accidents included a fatal crash last year. Independent Newspapers/Rusty Bradshaw

Addressing problem areas

MCDOT moves forward on 1 plan, continues study

By Rusty Bradshaw
Independent Newspapers

Maricopa County Department of Transportation officials are moving forward with planned improvements at 99th Avenue and Union Hills Drive, but made no commitment for similar work at Cameo Drive and 99th Avenue.

However, it will be nearly two years before residents see the results of the work at Union Hills. If a project is approved for Cameo, that would be even further in the future.

The Sun City Home Owners Association Transportation Committee lobbied for both projects for more than one year, citing numerous accidents at the Cameo location

and driver confusion at Union Hills.

"We have noticed there have been a lot of accidents at 99th Avenue and Cameo Drive," said Jeff Kramer, MCDOT roadway operations manager, in a traffic meeting in Sun City in October.

MCDOT officials conducted a traffic study for the 99th Avenue and Cameo Drive intersection and found there were 17 accidents there in recent years, including a fatal collision last year, according to Randy Dunsey, MCDOT project manager, during the SCHOA committee meeting Jan. 28. Causes listed in the report for the accidents included failure to yield right-of-way, running a stop sign, speed too high for conditions, improper left turn and unsafe lane changes.



Roy Logan

Mr. Dunsey outlined three alternatives for the 99th Avenue and Cameo Drive intersection. Alternative A calls for traffic signals and median left-turn lanes built above the existing canal with the turns made from the existing east-west bridge over the canal.

Alternative B, a "squeeze signal," calls for realignment of the northbound lanes to squeeze closer to the southbound lanes to allow for shorter left-turn lanes onto the bridge. This alternative also calls for traffic signals. Alternative C is the same squeeze configuration without traffic lights, instead controlled by stop signs on both Cameo directions and the left turns.

Mr. Dunsey said preliminary cost estimates are \$2.4 million for Alternative A, \$3.7 million for Alternative B and \$3.4 million for Alternative C.

MCDOT officials plan to continue to

See Problem — Page 6

Problem

Continued From Page 1

monitor the intersection, but in the interim they recommend installing flashing lights on stop signs in the median area, and installing high intensity warning devices on 99th Avenue that would be detection activated.

"We would continue the scoping study and refine the design, completing the scoping by summer of 2015," Mr. Dunsey said.

Mr. Dunsey said the MCDOT study showed the intersection met warrants based on crash experience, but did not meet volume-related warrants.

"They have no real plans for Cameo," said Roy Logan, SCHOA Transportation Committee chairman. "Their alternatives go from stop lights to doing nothing."

Work is moving forward on the project at

Union Hills Drive and 99th Avenue, although slowly. Nicolas Swart, MCDOT Traffic Management Division director, said completing the scoping study and beginning design work is happening now. The final design is expected to be completed early in 2015 with construction to start in late 2016 and work will extend into 2017.

The preliminary design calls for extending the box culvert and the bridge over it to widen the roadway, according to Mr. Swart.

"It will make it wider to align the lanes properly," Mr. Swart explained.

A northbound to eastbound left lane will also be installed, he added.

The plan will not address the narrowing of the roadway west of 99th Avenue. The two westbound lanes merge into one almost immediately past the intersection.

"That goes into a residential area," Mr. Swart said.

News Editor Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@newszap.com.

New law will allow golf carts on road shoulders

Weslie Swift

The Republic • azcentral.com

A new golf-cart law will allow residents of age-restricted communities to legally continue doing what they've illegally been doing for years.

Gov. Jan Brewer this month signed into law House Bill 2027, which Rep. Debbie Lesko, R-Glendale, introduced in January. The legislation will legalize the operation of golf carts on the street shoulders of Sun City, Sun City West and Sun Lakes.

Carolyn Healy, a Sun City resident who has owned a golf cart for 20 years, said she is pleased the legislation passed.

"It will be much safer for golf-cart drivers now that it is legal to drive in the shoulder lane," Healy said. "It will also make it safer and more efficient for general traffic as they will not have golf carts cluttering up the main lanes in the streets."

The 76-year-old told *The Republic* earlier this year that the shoulders should be reserved for both bicycles and golf carts.

In Sun City, half of the 27,500 households use golf carts for neighborhood transportation, according to the Sun City Home Owners Association. For many of these golf-cart owners, it is common to drive on the shoulders of Sun City's wide roads for safety reasons.

However, state law previously for-

bade cart drivers from utilizing the shoulders because golf carts are classified as motor vehicles, which cannot move in the same direction as another adjacent moving vehicle, said Richard Bohan, director of government relations for Maricopa County.

When the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office ticketed five people for driving their carts on the shoulders last summer, concerned residents began driving in the road, causing traffic backups and upsetting motorists, Lesko said.

This safety issue, brought to Lesko's attention by the cart owners, inspired her to write the bill.

Reps. Judy Burges, R-Sun City West; Karen Fann, R-Prescott; Rick Gray, R-Sun City; David Livingston, R-Peoria; and Phil Lovas, R-Peoria, co-sponsored the measure.

Both legislative chambers voted unanimously to approve the bill.

Before its passage, representatives from county government reached out to other such communities to see if the bill might be considered for other areas, according to Clint Hickman, Maricopa County District 4 supervisor. However, the problem apparently wasn't occurring outside Sun City, Sun City West, and Sun Lakes, Hickman said.

In addition, those three communities have roads wide enough to accommodate both a car and golf cart driving side by side.

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arizona.newsrap.com/westvalley



Independent Newspapers/Rusty Bradshaw

Sun City's wide medians on Peoria Avenue have a new look as Maricopa County Department of Transportation crews continue the renovation project. MCDOT also installed right-turn-only lanes on 99th Avenue at Bell Road and is studying a reconfiguration at 99th Avenue and Union Hills Drive.

Focus on Sun City

MCDOT projects enhance appearance, safety

By Rusty Bradshaw
Independent Newspapers

Drivers could see changes at the 99th Avenue and Union Hills Drive intersection if Maricopa County Department of Transportation studies show they are warranted.

MCDOT officials are in a "scoping study" phase of researching the intersection, according to Roberta Bonaski, MCDOT spokeswoman. The intersection has drawn fire from Sun City residents and officials because they believe it is confusing for drivers and does not provide the best turning options.

The 99th Avenue and Union Hills Drive intersection is one of three projects in Sun

City MCDOT is working on. The other includes redesigned large medians in Phase 1 and a dedicated right-turn lane on northbound 99th Avenue at Bell Road.

"It is satisfying to see the changes that are being made," said resident Jim Powell, a Sun City Home Owners Association director.

When he served as SCHOA Transportation Committee chairman, Mr. Powell lobbied for each change now being implemented or studied by MCDOT officials.

Reshaping intersection

Left turns from Union Hills Drive to 99th Avenue, both eastbound and westbound, confused drivers due to single-lane mark-



Jim Powell

ings on the extra long intersection because of the drainage canal bridge.

The situation created many near misses and much driver frustration, according to resident Lucky Marr, who did an informal observation of the intersection more than a year ago when SCHOA and residents were urging MCDOT officials to reconfigure the intersection. Problems were only slightly eased when the single-lane marking were not replaced when the intersection was repaved about one year ago.

MCDOT officials at that time said there were no plans to change the 99th Avenue and Union Hills Drive intersection.



Roberta Bonaski

V/F SC Traffic

Projects

Continued From Page 1

MCDOT officials in 2008 had replaced signals at the intersection because the ones installed in 1987 had become problematic to maintain and were not responsive to real traffic time demands, according to Ms. Bonaski. While the 2008 signals improved maintenance and traffic operations to an extent, it required a separate phase for eastbound and westbound left-turn movements due to the width restriction of the box culvert over the canal, she added.

"A follow-up traffic study and economic analysis indicated that potential benefits in terms of savings in delay and fuel could be introduced that would provide positive benefit/cost over the short- and medium-term and that prompted the decision to go ahead with a scoping study," Ms. Bonaski stated.

MCDOT's design process starts off with the scoping, which looks at various alternatives and a preliminary design for the selected alternative, Ms. Bonaski explained. After completion of the scoping phase a decision is made to proceed to design and construction. The scoping study is expected to be complete by the end of October, according to Ms. Bonaski.

She added widening of the intersection and box culvert will be required to address simultaneous left-turn movements.

"Hopefully, that will eliminate the two left-turn lanes from facing each other," Mr. Powell said.

Following the 2008 signal change, MCDOT implemented changes that included alternate striping layout in the middle of the intersection, timing changes to the left-turn arrows and screens in front of some of the signal heads to improve the signal indications for the drivers. It was hoped these changes would address the intersection's deficiencies.

In addition to widening, change at the intersection could include improved alignment and a right turn only lane for northbound 99th Avenue traffic turning to eastbound Union Hills Drive, according to Ms. Bonaski.

Roadway medians

MCDOT crews are about 40 percent complete converting large medians on Alabama, Peoria and 107th avenues from grass to a combination grass and desert landscaping.

The new design was selected after sever-

al other options were tried to not only conserve water but improve their appearance. Previously, the all-grass medians were flood irrigated. But the method left some areas without water due to uneven ground. That left patches of brown dead grass, especially in the summer. The new design has a patch of grass, surrounded by concrete curbing, down the middle of each median surrounded by decorative rock. The grass and trees are irrigated using a combination of drips and sprinklers, according to Ms. Bonaski.

"The medians are looking pretty good," Mr. Powell said. "The only problem is some grass growing up through the rock. But they are taking care of that."

Ms. Bonaski explained landscaping crews are spraying multiple applications of grass and weed killer in the new rock areas to permanently eliminate the old grass and prevent new grass and weeds from emerging. According to MCDOT's contract with Somerset Landscape and Maintenance, all grass and weeds will be eliminated from new rock landscape areas.

"A multi-application process is the best way to fully eliminate unwanted grass," Ms. Bonaski stated in an email. "There should be good results as soon as the third application of grass and weed killer goes down, which is designed to burn the leaf away."

The grass, curbing and rock are the only elements going in as part of this project, according to Ms. Bonaski.

Right turns

Right-turn only lanes were marked last week on northbound and southbound 99th Avenue at the intersection with Bell Road.

Mr. Powell and other SCHOA officials pushed for this change because the corresponding lanes on the opposite side of Bell Road ended abruptly and caused some driver confusion and a safety issue. The lanes already exist, but needed to be marked. That work was scheduled to be complete by Aug. 24.

SCHOA officials had lobbied for the same change on Del Webb at Bell Road where the same conditions exist, but Ms. Bonaski stated that would not be the case.

"The available roadway width is less than what is available on 99th Avenue and further evaluation is currently being done, which will determine how to proceed," she stated.

Mr. Powell is mystified why it cannot be done on Del Webb.

"It is too bad they are not doing it on Del Webb because the lane already exists," he said. "I wonder if there is some national, state or county regulation about separation of lanes."



Bill Pearson



Jim Stark

Independent Newspapers/Rusty Bradshaw
Sun City golf car drivers remain conflicted about whether to drive within the painted shoulder lines or the main traffic lane. Sun City Home Owners Association officials are trying to hammer out a solution by working with MCSO and MCDOT.

Driving toward a solution

SCHOA, authorities working to solve confusion

By Rusty Bradshaw
Independent Newspapers

Sun City Home Owners Association board members want to find a resolution to the Sun City golf car confusion. The board discussed in a closed to the public meeting May 28 possible options for the organization to explore to try to find a solution that will be acceptable for all, according to Jim Stark, SCHOA board president.

"We're working on a solution; we're trying to work with MCSO and MCDOT," he said. "The statute is not all that clear to allow for giving tickets."

The week before, in a SCHOA Transportation Committee meeting, Jim Powell,

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committee chairman, said SCHOA would consider a resolution to request Maricopa County Department of Transportation officials remove the painted white shoulder lines on 103rd Avenue. That, nor any other action item regarding golf cars, was not on the SCHOA board's agenda for its regular meeting last week.

"We may call a special meeting for this," Mr. Stark said.

Sun City had another fatal golf car accident a little after 7 a.m. May 25. While full details were not yet available as the investigation continues, it is known the victim was injured in the crash at 107th Avenue and Santa Fe Drive and died two days later.

Residents remain concerned about Maricopa County Sheriff's Office deputies writing citations to golf car drivers for traveling inside the painted shoulder lines on some

Sun City streets. The practice started in early-May, and while it seems to have diminished, residents' indignation has not.

SCHOA's Transportation Committee had a nearly packed house in the agency meeting room, a rare occurrence for the committee.

"I've been harping on this for years and never got much support from the community," Mr. Powell said. "It seems all it took was to get a few tickets written."

Mike Albertson, MCDOT spokesman said the painted shoulder lines started about six years ago when nearly 90 percent of residents with homes on 103rd Avenue north of Thunderbird Boulevard wanted more room to avoid traffic while backing out of their driveways. MCDOT officials painted the lines to provide that extra room. Mr. Albertson explained.

See Drive — Page 1

Drive

Continued From Page 1

"At one time, about 1984 I believe, 103rd was a 4-lane street," Mr. Albertson said.

Later, MCDOT officials painted white shoulder lines on selected other streets, most notably Boswell Boulevard south of Bell Road, to discourage drivers from traveling close to the curb and passing on the right, according to Roger Ball, now retired, when he served as MCDOT public information officer.

Much of the confusion by golf car drivers stems from conflicting information provided, according to Sun City resident Bill Pearson.

"I was told by Nicolas Swartz (MCDOT official) to drive my golf car inside the painted shoulder," Mr. Pearson said at the May 22 Transportation Committee meeting.

Based on information from MCDOT sources, previous Independent coverage of the issue stated travel was not allowed next to the curb even if there is no painted shoulder. However, Lt. Ken Booker, MCSO District 3, said that is not the case.

"If there is no painted line there, that is part of the roadway," he explained.

Mr. Albertson said inside a painted shoulder line might be the safest place for golf cars, but it is not legal for vehicles to travel inside them.

He also said if SCHOA, or anyone, wanted lines removed on 103rd, MCDOT officials will have to contact all the homeowners there to see if they concur, since they requested them in the first place.

"It is more of a hazard when golf cars are in the traffic lane," Mr. Powell said. "I think you can make a case for painted shoulders on other streets, but not 103rd."

He added the best resolution to the issue is to have the law changed.

"But until then, we have to obey the

law," Mr. Powell said.

Mr. Stark said it could take as long as two years to change the law.

"We did just fine until they started writing tickets," Mr. Pearson said. "I've been almost killed three times."

It was also suggested in the SCHOA Transportation Committee meeting that golf car accidents decreased after shoulder lines were removed in Sun City West. However, Lt. Booker said it is not yet known whether removing those lines made a difference in accident statistics.

Sun City resident Norma LaVoie related May 29 two incidents that happened to her and her husband within a 5-day period after returning from an out-of-town trip. She said her husband was driving his golf car in the regular travel lane and three cars were behind him, all with irate drivers.

"One lady was extremely close, like she was trying to scare him off the road, and the other two were honking," Ms. LaVoie explained.

Later she was driving the golf car to Safeway and experienced something similar.

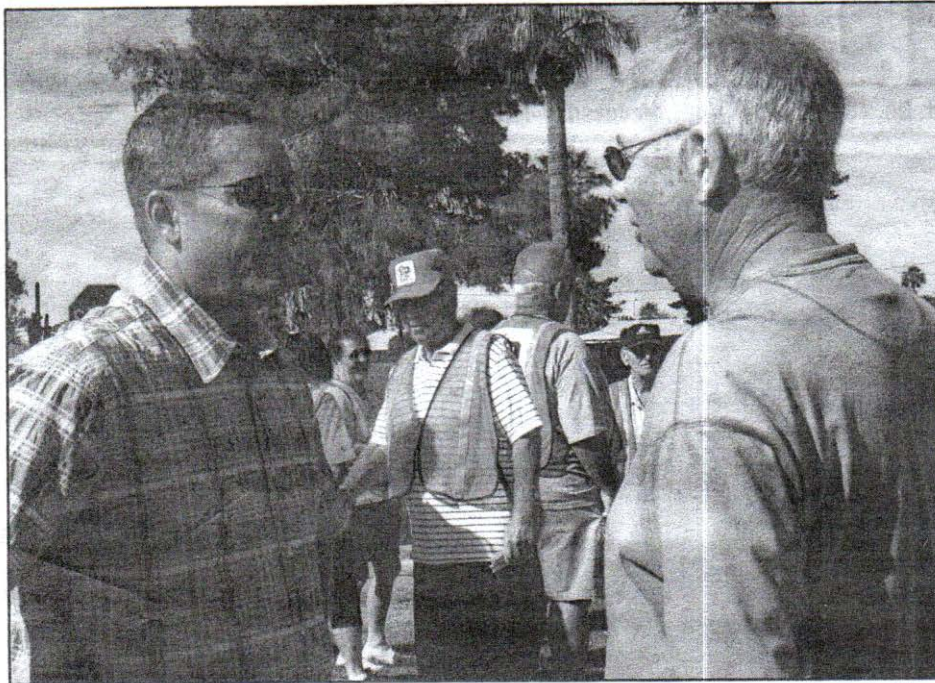
"There is a lot of road rage out there," she said.

That extends to parking lots, as Ms. LaVoie said she and her husband were at Fairway Recreation Center and parked their solar-powered golf car in a regular parking space so it could get the sun to recharge. When they came out of the center, there was a sticker on the golf car instructing them to park only in designated golf car spots.

"We called the Posse and talked to the center management, and they said they did not put the sticker there," Ms. LaVoie said.

One resident who spoke at the Transportation Committee meeting said it is not solely a golf car issue, but rather a driving issue, including drivers of automobiles.

News Editor Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@newszap.com.



Independent Newspapers/Rusty Bradshaw

New supervisor in town

Maricopa County District 4 Supervisor Clint Hickman, left, talks with Tim Lambin, Sun City Posse member, during a visit to the community last week. A Goodyear resident who has been on the job about three weeks, Mr. Hickman told residents he planned to be in District 4 communities as often as possible, with an emphasis on Sun City as it is the largest "city" in an unincorporated community in the district.

Traffic signal planned for Del Webb-Hutton

By Rusty Bradshaw
Independent Newspapers

With construction beginning to install a traffic signal at 107th Avenue and Oakmont Drive, Maricopa Department of Transportation officials are preparing for another signal at Del Webb Boulevard and Hutton Drive.

Roberta Crowe, MCDOT spokeswoman, confirmed the agency is in the design stage for a signal at that location. The signal is planned despite residents near the intersection opposing it.

"A couple who had recently moved in a condo near there were circulating petitions with their neighbors to try and stop it," Ms. Crowe explained.

However, based on information derived from a traffic study, the signal is warranted, she added.

Since it is now in the design phase, no construction date has yet been scheduled.

The Del Webb-Hutton signal was planned

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UF Sc Traffic

LOCAL News

Benevilla looking for Peoria-area volunteers

Benevilla, a Surprise based human service agency, is looking to increase its volunteer base in Peoria.

Benevilla has two day centers and an in-home volunteer program that serves the elderly and youth with developmental disabilities. At this time of year, many volunteers are lost because winter visitors return to their out-of-state homes.

Volunteering can be as little as one hour per month and schedules are flexible. Volunteers assist with grocery shopping, home services, home-delivered meals, transportation to medical appointments and basic home maintenance.

Interested residents are encouraged to

call 623-584-4999 or visit www.benevilla.org.

Sun City COA sets summer hours

The Sun City Condo Owners Association will switch to summer hours in May.

The summer hours will be 9 a.m.-noon Tuesday-Thursday beginning Wednesday, May 1. These hours will be in effect May-July. The COA office, 12630 N. 103rd Ave., Suite 215, is closed throughout August.

Trine sends out call for professors

Trine University staff will be on hand to recruit adjunct professors for the Peoria lo-

cation, 14100 N. 83rd Ave., 9 a.m.-noon and 3-7 p.m. Tuesday, May 7.

Applicants must have a master's degree, preferably a doctoral degree, in one of the following fields: Accounting, business, communication, computer science, criminal justice, economics, engineering, English, government, history, human resource management, law, marketing, mathematics or psychology. Also, they should bring one folder containing a resume/vita showing all work experiences, including college level teaching, all transcripts (including undergraduate and graduate) and three letters of recommendation.

Reservations required by May 5. For more information or to make a reservation, e-mail peoria@trine.edu or call 480-209-3549.

Signal

Continued From Page 2

after the traffic study showed increased traffic and a difficulty of Hutton drivers finding a safe gap in Del Webb traffic flow, according to Ms. Crowe. The traffic volume on Del Webb is about 14,000 vehicles per day, averaging 20 vehicles per minute, she added.

"It can also be anticipated that the signal operation will reduce the current lining up of vehicles on Hutton in front of homes, as

a green light will now be available for those vehicles, as compared to the current condition of motorists having to wait for a safe gap in the traffic to turn onto or cross Del Webb," Ms. Crowe wrote in a letter to homeowners who opposed the signal.

The green for Hutton traffic will operate separately for eastbound and westbound traffic. The design is not expected to require additional rights-of-way, and is expected to provide additional pedestrian safety, according to Ms. Crowe.

MCDOT officials rejected a 4-way stop, similar to the Boswell Boulevard and Hutton Drive intersection, at the Del Webb-Hutton crossing because of the multiple lanes and wider shoulder there.

"(That) require more complex operation (and driver interpretation) in deciding who has the right-of-way," Ms. Crowe stated in the letter. "Moreover, the traffic approach volumes at Boswell and Hutton are split fairly equally, as compared to Del Webb and Hutton where 90 percent of the traffic volume approaching the intersection is on Del Webb."

Not all residents in the area of Del Webb Boulevard and Hutton Drive opposed the signal. Malcolm Lauderdale, in a letter to Ms. Crowe, said many residents there favored a traffic signal.

"My wife and I have lived on the corner

of Del Webb and Hutton for 21 years, and for at least the last 10 I have felt that a light there would be helpful (and much safer!)," he stated. "We were very pleased when we heard of the plans to put it in."

Sun City Homeowners Association board member Jim Powell, chairman of SCHOA's Transportation Committee, said he was concerned because the intersection is so close to the Bell Road crossing. However, his concerns were eased when he learned the signal would remain green for Del Webb Boulevard traffic unless there was cross traffic on Hutton Drive.

"That might not be so bad," he said during the committee's April 24 meeting.

Mr. Powell also continues to urge MCDOT to create left-turn lanes at Bell Road for northbound traffic on Del Webb Boulevard and 99th Avenue. At both locations, there is a third lane south of Bell Road, but the lane only extends a few feet on the north side of Bell Road.

"When cars cross in that lane, they right away have to merge to the left," he said. "That seems dangerous."

MCDOT officials in the past have said criteria for turn lanes there have not been met.

News Editor Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@newszap.com.

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Jim Powell

Independent Newspapers/Rusty Bradshaw
 A pair of golf cars on the right zoom past traffic southbound on 103rd Avenue approaching Grand Avenue while a third, traveling just under 30 mph, drives in the regular traffic lane. Because they are registered motor vehicles, golf cars are supposed to be driven in the traffic lane, not on the roadway shoulder, whether marked or unmarked.

Flashing lights in the mirror

Golf car drivers ticketed for driving on roadway shoulder

By Rusty Bradshaw
 Independent Newspapers

Some Sun City golf car drivers got a bit of a surprise with flashing red and blue lights in their mirror.

A trio of golf cars were pulled over by Maricopa County Sheriff's Office deputies at different points on Boswell Boulevard between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. May 6. Two were stopped between Bell Road and Hutton Drive and a third was halted on Prairie Hills Circle. Sun City resident Tom Major was one of them.

"I had the illusion those (painted shoulder) lanes were for golf cars," he said. "I was dumbfounded."

What do you think?

Should golf car drivers be cited for driving on the shoulder? Should golf cars drive in the regular travel lane?

•Public forums: arizona.newszap.com

•E-mail: rbradshaw@newszap.com

The nature of the stops, and how many were conducted, was not revealed by MCSO officials, but District 3 Lieutenant Ken Booker said it was not due to orders from MCSO officials to crack down on golf car drivers in the age-restricted community.

"It was not a mandate that came down from the district," he explained. "But deputies do have the authority to stop and even cite golf car drivers on their own discretion."

Mr. Major believes a warning would have been more appropriate, and the incident made him leery of driving his golf car on Sun City streets again.

"I certainly don't want to get another ticket," he said.

Sun City resident R.E. Bondon agrees warnings would be better than citations.

"The Sun City Posse giving out warnings instead of MCSO issuing citations would be a better way to handle this problem as long as those lines remain," he stated in a letter.

Just a week previously, MCSO officials addressed golf car safety in an April 30 Sun City Home Owners Association town hall. Jim Powell, SCHOA board member and Transportation Committee chairman, said general safety was the main topic of discussion. He added nothing was mentioned about an en-

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Citations

Continued From Page 1

forcement crackdown on golf car rules.

"They encouraged golf car drivers to use their seat belts because when they make sharp turns people have fallen out," Mr. Powell said.

The Retirement Community Association of Sun City, a group of residents who advocate for the active retirement lifestyle of the community, encourages seat belt use in golf cars, and have conducted two events in which they gave away golf car seat belts.

Deputies at the town hall also reminded drivers they are not to operate their golf cars

within a painted shoulder.

"That is considered the edge of the roadway," Mr. Powell said.

Golf car drivers can pull into the painted shoulder and stop to allow backed up traffic behind them to pass, he added. Because golf cars must be registered with the state just like all other motorized vehicles, their drivers are required to obey all traffic laws applying to automobiles. No motorized vehicle is allowed to travel on the roadway shoulder, which is available for parking.

"If you're traveling on the shoulder, whether in a car or golf car, and have an accident, you are liable," Mr. Powell said.

He speculated deputies may be exercising some extra vigilance because of a recent spike in golf car related accidents, including fatalities, in both Sun City and Sun City West.

However, Mr. Bondon believes forcing golf cars into the regular traffic lanes is a safety hazard.

"For years, most golf car drivers in Sun City have driven on the extreme right side of the road to avoid being hit by faster moving cars, along with avoiding obscene gestures, horn blowing and tailgating, to name just a few," he stated. "Maricopa County Department of Transportation and the Sheriff's Office don't seem to accept the fact that golf cars driving in the midst of speeding traffic is hazardous to your health."

A valid driver's license is required for golf car operators. A license with a "golf car only" restriction is also available. While golf cars must be registered, those used only for

crossing streets between golf course sections, such as those rented at golf courses, are not required to be registered, according to Doug Nintzel, ADOT spokesman.

Sun City's wider streets create confusion and sometimes conflict between golf cars and automobiles. Several agencies have tried to find solutions to those issues that are acceptable to all, but have not met with much success so far. SCHOA's transportation committee continually talks with Maricopa County Department of Transportation, Maricopa County Sheriff's Office and the Sun City Posse.

The wider streets give some drivers the impression there are two lanes of traffic in one direction on some streets where there is actually one.

MCDOT officials a few years ago began painting white lines on some roadways to mark the shoulder areas in an effort to discourage drivers from passing on the right and golf cars from traveling on the shoulder. SCHOA transportation committee members discourage that practice because it gives the impression those are dedicated golf car lanes.

"It has just created more confusion, and more problems, than it solves," Mr. Powell said.

Golf cars must be in the traffic lane and drivers can be cited if they are inside a painted shoulder, according to MCSO deputy Tom Miller. He said MCSO has no policy of not citing golf car drivers for driving in the marked shoulder.

"It is a citeable offense, and we cannot tell deputies not to issue a citation for a citeable offense," Mr. Miller said.

However, he believes it is as much a matter of education than citing drivers.

"If I can achieve the goal of law obedience by talking to someone, so be it; if it takes a citation, so be it," Mr. Miller said.

Transportation committee members also asked MCDOT officials last year to pull or correct a golf car safety video on its website that shows golf cars driving in the painted shoulder. MCDOT officials have

long claimed there are no dedicated car lanes anywhere in Maricopa County.

MCDOT officials emphasize that golf cars and neighborhood electric vehicles must have approved equipment, be properly registered and cannot operate on any roadway where the speed limit exceeds 35 mph.

Mr. Powell also believes the golf car issues continue to come up because there is a lack of traffic enforcement in Sun City. MCSO officials, who have jurisdiction over the entire area of the county, have dealt with traffic issues in the last few years and have adjusted and still maintain a level of enforcement. MCSO's District 3 continues to have one traffic officer for the district stretch from 67th Avenue to as far west as Valley and Jomax roads, according to Tom Frieberg, MCSO District 3 traffic officer. In a 2010 interview. In 2011 District 3 implemented an enforcement squad program that consists of a group of officers to trouble shoot and respond according to Mr. Miller. However, the enforcement squad still covers the entire district. In addition to traffic enforcement, the squads are responsible for other duties while on shift, Mr. Miller added.

"I have handled as many as 15 accidents in a four-day week and as few as five," Frieberg explained. "Minor accidents can take up to 90 minutes while more serious ones can take up to five hours."

Accident coverage is one of the primary duties enforcement squads also deal with, Mr. Miller explained.

Other MCSO patrol officers carry out traffic enforcement if they see a violation while on their patrols, but they are stretched across the same wide area of the district, according to Mr. Miller.

"The Posse does help by taking care of things like traffic control when needed that helps free us up," Mr. Frieberg said. "But we are still stretched thin."

News Editor Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@news

Center rolls out transit solutions

STAFF REPORT

The Banner Olive Branch Senior Center hosted a transportation fair for seniors Tuesday morning to offer residents information about what options are available to them.

Many seniors might not think about transportation options in the community unless they themselves require the services, said Olive Branch director Ivy Shirley.

Another problem, Shirley said, is after the loss of Sun City Area Transit, the transportation issue has not

been a hot topic in the community.

Representatives from the Regional Public Transportation Authority, Total Transit, the parent company for Discount Cab, Benevilla and other transportation stakeholders gave presentations and had booths at the Olive Branch event, each highlighting what they are doing to help alleviate transit concerns in the area.

Becky Johnson, the mobility coordinator at Valley Metro under the RPTA, said bus services can extend three-

quarters of a mile past a set bus route for passengers certified under the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, a status which Johnson helps determine for qualified individuals at the organization's mobility center in Phoenix.

For areas beyond that extended bus route, Total Transit has stepped in to offer rides to other Sun Citians in need of transportation, with priority again for ADA-certified passengers.

Information: www.valleymetro.org.



DAVE MARTINEZ/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Becky Johnson, Valley Metro's mobility coordinator, speaks to visitors at the Banner Olive Branch Transportation Fair on Tuesday.

Bus drivers' strike clips Sun City

JEFF DEMPSEY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

As a bus union workers' strike entered its fourth day this morning, riders all across the Valley are being affected, leaving local leaders worried and residents unsure what to do.

Shortly before 7 this morning at the bus stop on 87th and Peoria avenues, Peoria resident Alan Otts sat waiting patiently. The sun was just beginning to rise, and Otts had been at the stop since a little after 6.

"I haven't seen a bus going either way in 45 minutes," he

SEE ROUTE, A5



Alan Otts of Peoria waits for a Valley bus at a stop at 87th and Peoria avenues this morning. He had been waiting 45 minutes for a bus to connect him to his destination in Phoenix.

JEFF DEMPSEY/DAILY NEWS-SUN

VALLEY TRANSPORTATION
DAILY NEWS-SUN
MARCH 13, 2012

ROUTE

FROM A1

said.

Otts does maintenance work for a few apartment complexes around the Valley. Tuesdays and Thursdays he takes the bus to 19th and Glendale avenues. When he heard the bus strike was on, he said his heart sunk.

"I panicked," he said. "I need to get across town, and I really have no other options. Call a taxi, I guess, but I can't afford that. There's no other way down there for me."

Otts said he would give the bus another half hour.

"And if it doesn't show I'll just work at this complex today," he said. "I'll tell the boss I couldn't get over there. He knows there's a strike on."

Of most concern to Sun Citians is Route 106, which begins at 105th Avenue and Santa Fe Drive in the middle of the Banner Boswell Medical Center complex and

travels eastbound along Peoria Avenue as far as the Mayo Clinic on 136th Street and Shea Boulevard in Scottsdale.

Under normal operations, a bus would arrive at the Banner Boswell bus stop at least once an hour, and every half an hour at other stops along the way. This week, with operations crippled by the strike, Valley Metro has advised buses will only arrive every four hours. Riders have been told they should seek other methods of transportation.

"I would say it's a real detriment to us here in this community," said Michelle Dionisio, president and CEO of Benevilla in Surprise.

Dionisio has been working on transportation issues in the West Valley, and specifically the Sun Cities, for more than a year. The community transportation stakeholders group Benevilla organized includes representatives from the Recreation Centers of Sun City, Sun City Home Owners Association, the cities of Glendale and Peoria and the town of Youngtown, Valley Metro and the Maricopa As-

sociation of Governments, among others. At a meeting last month, she said the goal of the group is not to address situations like this week's bus strike, necessarily, but to lessen the impact when a strike does happen.

"We're trying to come up with short-term and long-term solutions to our transportation issues," she said. "We felt it was important to get all these stakeholders together to address those concerns and come up with something that will be more than just a Band-Aid."

The membership of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1433's strike against Veolia is a Valleywide concern. Veolia/Phoenix bus operators represented by the union account for 31 of the 101 Valley Metro bus routes. Factor in Veolia/Tempe bus drivers and that number jumps to 50 of 101 routes.

Dionisio said she is concerned for the residents who use the Route 106 stop at Banner Boswell.

"It's really the only route we have, not only for seniors who need to get to the hospital but workers

in our community who need that bus stop, too," she said. "It really is a concern, and I'm sad to see this happening."

Dionisio said the community transportation stakeholders have a meeting scheduled for this week, and the strike will be a topic of discussion. She said, if nothing else, the strike is proof the Northwest Valley needs more options when it comes to public transportation.

"There's no question we need more modalities," she said. "Especially in our region, we're going to have to be very creative to meet the needs of everyone in the community. And that's not just seniors, that's everyone. People don't think about it but a lot of teenagers rely on public transportation, too."

Dionisio said she can only hope the strike is resolved soon.

"It's unfortunate this is happening. With what little transportation options we have out here it's important they be maintained."

Jeff Dempsey may be reached at 623-876-2531 or jdempsey@yourwestvalley.com.

Locals demand transportation assistance

JEFF DEMPSEY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Robert Gooltz has been to Bermuda and Maui, so he knows a bit about islands. The Sun Cities, he said, are not islands, and the people living there shouldn't feel stranded because of a lack of transportation options.

"Between Sun City, Sun City West and Sun City Grand we have 100,000 seniors when we're all here in the winter," Gooltz said Monday during the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging biennial meeting in Peoria. "It's absolutely ridiculous that we do not have more transportation available. We have seniors who are like prisoners in their own homes simply because they can no longer drive."

The council's Senior Action Day took place at American Legion Post No. 62, providing seniors an opportunity to speak with legislators about the issues important to them. Reps. Rick Gray of Sun City and Debbie Lesko of Glendale, both R-District 9, attended the session.

Gooltz of the Sun City West Foundation told the panel that transportation concerns must be addressed.

"People refer to the Sun Cities as island communities," he said. "Well, I've been to Bermuda twice. I've been to Maui twice. Those are islands. We're not islands."

He said seniors in the Sun

SEE SENIORS, A5



DAVE MARTINEZ/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Robert Gooltz, a director for the Sun City West Foundation, speaks during the Senior Action Day forum in Peoria Monday. Legislators and other officials listened to concerns from area residents, with transportation topping the list.

SCAT

FROM A1

Cities who cannot drive are left with few options to get around, especially since Sun Cities Area Transit closed its doors.

Lesko said the Maricopa Association of Governments is conducting a study to identify such issues since SCAT disbanded.

"I believe they are trying to find money to create a temporary fix," she said.

Gray said everyone is hurting right now, and he is reminded of that with every meeting he attends.

"Every group I go to, they all say they need more money," he said. "We've got some serious issues on the table right now and that makes it very hard. But

this is a critical area and something we need to address."

Gray said as vice chairman of the House Transportation Committee he intends to do just that.

"We will be looking to identify the areas of greatest need and focus what little money and resources we have on those areas," he said.

"I actually live in Sun City," Gray said. "So, of course, I have a sensitivity to aging issues. We're all getting older, including me."

He said meetings like Monday's are valuable for the governor's office as well as the Legislature.

"What I've learned living in Sun City is what a valuable community we have here and how important it is to protect it," he said. "And those issues are not just important here in

the Sun Cities, but to seniors all across the state. We need to hear your input."

Some of those in attendance expressed frustration with the Arizona Legislature. One man said a familiar refrain he has heard is that all incumbents should be voted out.

Lesko said she understands that sentiment.

"People see what is going on with our economy right now, and they're afraid," she said. "That's why we have the tea party. That's why we have these 'Occupy' people. They're afraid."

For more information on the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging, visit www.azgovernor.gov/gaca.

Jeff Dempsey may be reached at 623-876-2531 or jdempsey@yourwestvalley.com.



MCDOT work crews install a crosswalk sign at Aleppo and Meeker.

SIGNALING TRAFFIC FLOW

MCDOT project in SCW one of several in region

BY PATRICK O'GRADY • THE WESTER

Aleppo Drive just south of Meeker was torn up for about 10 days this month as the Maricopa County Department of Transportation began a signal installation that will last until September.

The roadwork was scheduled to be done by July 19, but the county was continuing on in transforming the intersection from a four-way stop to traffic signals, said Roberta Crowe, a spokeswoman for MCDOT.

The improvements will add left-turn lanes in all directions and the signal will be tied together with others at R.H. Johnson and Meeker as well as Meeker and Grand through the county's intelligent transportation system.

The Aleppo construction work was so the county could install fiber optic cables so the signals were connected. Once done, the system would allow traffic engineers at a centralized location to control movement through signals.

"That will give us future capabilities for real-time traffic management," Crowe said.

A similar system is being installed along Bell Road in conjunction with the county, Peoria and Surprise that will link the signals from Loop 101 west.

See *Signal*, Page 4

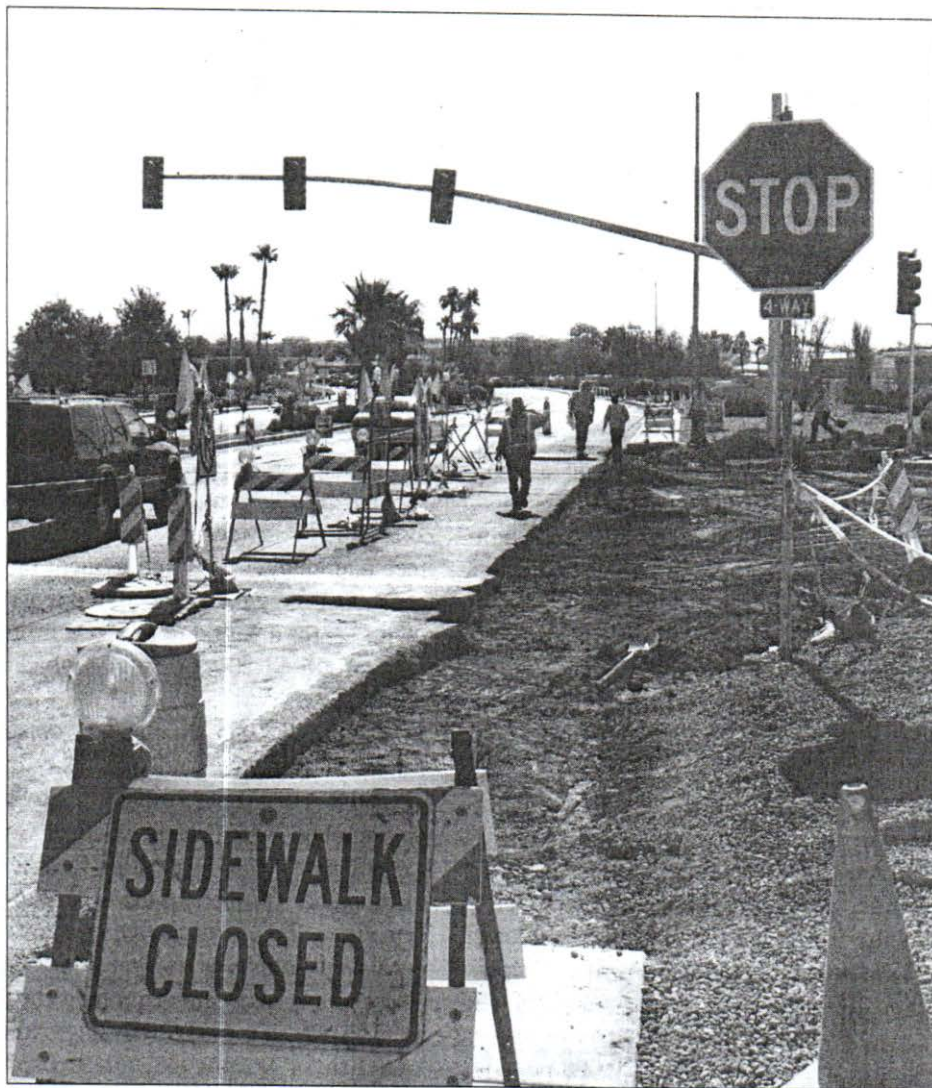
Signal, from Page 1

The Sun City West work isn't the only signal being installed by MCDOT. The county also is adding a signal on Loop 303 to what it calls the U.S. 60/Grand Avenue link road that connects the two major transportation corridors. That project began June 1 and is slated to end in early September.

Also on tap are a MCDOT projects at Meeker and Camino del Sol and R.H. Johnson and Camino Del Sol and Spanish Garden. The Camino Del Sol project is slated to start later this summer and the project at Spanish Garden is still in the design phase.

Another project at Johnson and Meeker is slated for October, according to MCDOT.

The need for signals and reconstructed intersections have risen as more people have moved further west in the Valley and Surprise has expanded its population.



Motor safety project comes to Sun City

By Brent Whiting

BRENT.WHITING@ARIZONAREPUBLIC.COM

A busy Sun City intersection has been picked as the first spot in Arizona for a pilot project aimed at fostering motor-safety for older drivers.

Work is in progress at 99th and Grand avenues for the installation of a number of senior-friendly traffic improvements.

Included will be traffic signs with larger lettering and reflective qualities that will make for easier reading, said Ian Satter, a spokesman for the Arizona Department of Transportation.

There will be traffic signals with larger red, yellow and green lenses, as well as enhanced crossing signals for pedestrians, Satter said.

Also, improvements will be made that will allow for easier turns and afford seniors with better visibility when making them, he said.

"These are good things that will benefit everybody," Satter said. "If driving conditions are improved for senior citizens, then safety will be enhanced for motorists of all ages."

De Von Guthery, chairman of a transportation committee for the Sun City Home Owners Association, said he welcomes the improvements that are



3.0" Radius, 0.8" Border, White on Green;
"Grand Ave" ClearView-Hwy-1-W



3.0" Radius, 0.8" Border, White on Green;
"Grand Ave" E Mod.

The intersection of 99th and Grand avenues will receive senior-friendly traffic signs as part of a motoring safety pilot project.

scheduled for completion Feb. 13.

"It sounds like a good idea to me," Guthery said. "It should help people see better and get through the area a little

easier."

The traffic improvements are based on guidelines offered by the Federal Highway Administration, said Steven

Ogburn, a project manager for Kimley-Horn and Associates Inc., a Phoenix consulting firm that has helped guide the work.

Sun City was selected for the project because it is a retirement community with a state highway, Grand Avenue, that passes through, he said.

Positive results may lead to similar projects elsewhere in Arizona, Ogburn said.

Mail surveys will go out to Sun City residents seeking project feedback, he said.

Ogburn said the federal agency has recommended an array of improvements to enhance the safety of elderly drivers and pedestrians.

Statistically, drivers 75 years and older have higher rates of fatal crashes, on a per-mile driving basis, that motorists in any other age groups, except teenagers, according to the transportation agency.

In general, seniors do not cope with complicated traffic situations as well as younger drivers, so improved signs and other things can foster safety.

The failure to heed traffic signs is leading cause of crashes involving seniors, according to the agency.

Sun Citians air objections

County assures residents Peoria Avenue expansion isn't done deal

ANNIE BOON
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Maricopa County's recommendation to expand Peoria Avenue has been met by some Sun Citians with outrage and frustration, but at Monday's transportation plan meeting, county officials said Peoria expansions are not set in stone.

"These are not projects,

these are part of a study," Roberta Crowe, spokeswoman for the Maricopa County Department of Transportation, said Monday during the Transportation System Plan update meeting at the West Valley Art Museum in Surprise.

About 300 Sun Cities area residents poured into the museum and were able to view various maps and charts

that depicted some of the county's proposed transportation changes and visions for the future. Although the open house was designed to gather public input on MCDOT's 20-year vision for all county transportation, officials were on hand to answer questions specifically regarding the Agua Fria River crossings study.

"I did expect the turnout. I

knew that Sun City residents are very passionate about their homes and lifestyles, and preserving that lifestyle," Crowe said.

Phase I resident Mary Niven lives on Peoria Avenue and said she expects her property value will diminish if her street becomes a major thoroughfare.

See PEORIA AVENUE, A5

From A1

"I feel it's absolutely ridiculous to put a main thoroughfare through a residential area," she said. "Even if it doesn't happen for a few years, people will find out about it, and they won't buy in the area."

Possible expansions to Peoria Avenue, Crowe said, have been a hot topic, and she assured attendees that their opinions and reasonable alternatives will be heard and considered. But, it remains to be seen if it will be enough to sway county decision-makers.

"Tonight's input and input throughout conceptual design and design phases will be included in the final report. Public support is one of the criteria, but it's not the only criteria," she said. "Say the Sun City Traffic Impact Committee, which is led by a former transportation professional (Gary Bourne of Sun City) researched and came up with viable alternatives, would we consider them? Absolutely."

As the next two Agua Fria River crossings phases continue, additional public input will be sought, she said, and if there are any "fatal flaws"

IF YOU GO

- **WHAT:** Sun City Traffic Impact Committee meeting.
- **WHEN:** 6 tonight.
- **WHERE:** Sundial Recreation Center, 103rd Avenue and Boswell Boulevard.

discovered in the proposed Peoria Avenue expansion, it could be reconsidered as an option.

However, MCDOT's Right-Roads study already tested any possible fatal flaws and Peoria Avenue passed the test, Crowe said. The first tier of the study asked the questions: "Is there a fatal flaw in terms of connections with the regional roadway network? Is there a fatal flaw with potential local roadway connections or land use impacts? Is there a fatal flaw due to engineering complexity or other technical issues at the crossing site?"

The study concluded that the three highest priority crossings for final evaluation are: Olive Avenue, an existing four-lane bridge that would get two additional lanes; Glendale Avenue, an existing five-lane bridge that would get one lane; and Peoria Avenue, which would require new construction as there's no

road going through the riverbed.

"We need 26 more lanes by 2026 between the I-10 freeway and Bell Road," Crowe said. "All of these crossings will need to be implemented." She later added that although they will all need to be implemented, it's not definite which ones will get the go ahead and which, if any, will be rejected.

Elizabeth Rohn-Nelson of Sun City, District 2 delegate to this year's White House Conference on Aging, attended the open house and said she objects to expanding Peoria Avenue.

"I don't know if the county listens. I hope they will with all of us objecting to this," she said. "Good government begins at the local level — this is the local level."

Sun City resident Sue Painter wasn't impressed with the informal open house.

"We were led to believe we'd get more give and take, but we didn't get it," said Painter, a member of the Sun City Traffic Impact Committee. "We all have questions we need answered."

"But we were really tickled with all the people that came

out here," said her husband, Bill Painter.

"A lot of Sun Citians are very exercised about this. I'm not surprised at the turnout," said George Davis, Sun City Home Owners Association director. He said he was neutral on the issues and would like to learn more about the options before taking a stance. "(MCDOT) is on our side, but they have limited options. It's going to be done, we just don't know where, but everyone knows we need more east/west routes."

Bourne encouraged residents to attend the Sun City Traffic Impact Committee meeting at 6 p.m. today in Sundial Auditorium, 103rd Avenue and Boswell Boulevard, when he will present some alternatives to Peoria Avenue expansions.

His primary suggestion is to build a freeway next to Northern Avenue that would link Loop 101 with Loop 303. Before retiring, Bourne worked as a civil engineer with the Arizona Department of Transportation for more than 15 years. He designed freeways.

Annie Boon may be reached at 876-2532 or aboone@aztrib.com.

Wilson opposes Peoria expansion

United residents express thanks

By Matt Loeschman
Independent Newspapers

Maricopa County Supervisor Max Wilson's firm opposition of the Peoria Avenue expansion has some Sun Citians claiming victory in their united fight against the project.

"It's pretty simple," Supervisor Wilson said last week. "I was elected to represent the

people. And the people's voice was pretty loud on this issue. I can't support expansion of Peoria Avenue through Sun City."

Without the supervisor's support, the plan to expand Peoria Avenue to six lanes in Sun City has a minimal chance of being approved by the five-member board.

"I can't say it's entirely dead," Supervisor Wilson explained. "But in our system, generally there is respect for each other. They know how I

feel. The probability of this being approved is very, very low."

The Maricopa County Department of Transportation RightRoads study concluded last October with three options for opening up better east/west traffic flow in the West Valley. The three options include adding two additional lanes to Olive Avenue; adding one additional lane to Glendale Avenue;

See Peoria — Page 3

"I was elected to represent the people. And the people's voice was pretty loud on this issue. I can't support expansion of Peoria Avenue through Sun City."

— Max Wilson, Maricopa County Dist. 4 Supervisor

Peoria

Continued From Page 1

and new construction of a bridge and expansion of Peoria Avenue, the option that has many Sun Citians very concerned. The plan indicated two additional lanes would be added to Peoria Avenue in Sun City, making it six lanes total.

MCDOT officials estimate 26 additional lanes are needed by 2026 between Bell Road and Interstate 10 to handle future traffic needs.

"We've got to find a way to get this done," said MCDOT spokeswoman Roberta Crowe. "That is the purpose of these studies."

But according to Supervisor Wilson, getting it done will not include interfering with the Sun City lifestyle.

"We heard from so many people when MCDOT held their open houses," he said. "And I took that into account. I took an awful lot from those meetings."

Two transportation meetings last month proved just how pas-

sionately Sun Citians oppose the project.

Nearly 1,000 people attended a pair of meetings Nov. 14-15 to voice their displeasure with MCDOT's plan and learn about possible alternatives.

Following a Nov. 14 MCDOT open house at a jam-packed West Valley Art Museum, a Nov. 15 Sun City Traffic Impact Committee meeting at the Sundial Recreation Center drew another 500 residents.

Sue Painter, a member of the traffic impact committee, was pleased to learn of Supervisor Wilson's stance on the issue.

"I'm very pleased with what Max has said," Ms. Painter explained. "I think he saw the passion we have on this matter. There are 3,000 signatures on the petitions — we had a strong voice and we did it the right way. I'm glad he took note of our concerns."

Residents have questioned a variety of different facets of the plan, including safety issues, potential devaluation of homes along Peoria Avenue and infringement upon their way of living.

"These are legitimate concerns," Supervisor Wilson said. "And I believe most of these people have paid their dues. They don't need to be worrying about stuff like this. Let them enjoy the lifestyle they moved here to take advantage of."

"I do care for them — I have many friends in Sun City," he added. "And since I am in a position to do something about it, I'm going to do the right thing for Sun City."

Sun Citian Gary Bourne, a former transportation engineer who has lent his expertise to the traffic impact committee, said the supervisor should be applauded for his work.

"I'm quite sure the people of Sun City will be very happy with this outcome," Mr. Bourne said. "It took a lot of effort on Max's part — he has Sun Citians' best interests in mind. And this shows that when people work together on something you feel strongly about, you can get positive results."

Ms. Painter had similar kudos for Mr. Bourne.

"His expertise on this — you

can't put a value on it," she said. "Gary has worked in the system and he knows what it takes to get through to people."

Mr. Bourne calls for a six-lane highway to be built adjacent to Northern Avenue, stretching from Loop 101 to Loop 303. That roadway could handle up to 140,000 vehicles per day, he said, providing relief for smaller east/west roads.

"Northern makes the most sense," Mr. Bourne said.

Supervisor Wilson said he supports the construction of a Northern Avenue Parkway.

"This could solve a lot of the Peoria Avenue problems," he explained.

The Regional Transportation Plan to be paid for by Prop. 400 monies includes a \$250 million Northern Avenue Parkway linking Grand Avenue to Loop 303. There are several hurdles to making the project a reality, however, including competition from other transportation projects and the cooperation of several entities.

Ms. Painter said the traffic impact committee will now turn its attention to other pressing

matters.

"We're not stopping here," she said. "We need better ways to get across Grand Avenue. I think that's the next area to focus on."

December 7, 2005

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

Peoria plan raises ire

Most disagree
with president

By Matt Loeschman
Independent Newspapers

Sun City residents used the public comment portion of the Nov. 8 Home Owners Association Board meeting to express their growing concerns regarding the potential expansion of Peoria Avenue.

Almost 100 residents crowded the SCHOA conference room last week to hear Board President Tom Stolt's opinion that widening Peoria Avenue is the "least offensive" road expansion plan being proposed by the Maricopa County Department of Transportation.

"None of MCDOT's options

are very good," Mr. Stolt said. "But the HOA wants to work with Maricopa County to be as positive as we can. The community is growing and we've got to grow with it."

That statement elicited some booing from the large crowd. The board president insisted any road expansion through Sun City is negative, but said the HOA must remain proactive in dealing with Maricopa County. The HOA board, Mr. Stolt said, had previously taken no official stance on the issue and he told the crowd any statements he made in the past reflected his personal opinion.

Resident Sue Painter attended the meeting and said she

See IRE — Page 8

IRE

Continued From Page 1

came away dumfounded at Mr. Stolt's statement.

"This board is supposed to act for the good of the Sun City people," she said. "I'm not seeing it. To say this option is the 'least negative' is just ridiculous. There are other plans that make so much more sense."

MCDOT's RightRoads study concluded in October with three options for opening up better east/west traffic flow in the West Valley. The three options include adding two additional lanes to Olive Avenue; adding one additional lane to Glendale Avenue; and new construction and expansion of Peoria Avenue, the option that has many Sun Citians extremely concerned.

Several residents used last week's meeting to vent their frustration, saying the HOA board should oppose any expansion of streets in Sun City.

"This is a disaster waiting to happen," Ms. Painter said. "This will hurt more than just Sun City and it will change the makeup of our community. It's sad that when they first built all the homes, the roads weren't put in first. We're paying the price for bad planning."

When the public comment portion of the meeting began to spiral out of control, Mr. Stolt ended the session and moved forward with other business.

Some residents have unified to make sure the Peoria expansion never happens.

In an effort to establish a consolidated voice in transportation issues, a small group of Sun Citians last month formed the Sun City Traffic Impact Committee.

A group of six people met Oct. 17 to discuss the structure and basis for the committee that will keep a close eye on the future of Sun City's thoroughfares and the

impact of increased traffic on the community as the West Valley's growth continues.

Currently, the group is focused squarely on MCDOT's potential plans for Peoria Avenue.

"If these expansion plans go through, it could have an adverse effect on Sun City," Committee member Marge Murphy said. "Expansion to four lanes is very dangerous in an area with so many golf carts. We don't want any needless accidents to occur. We need to do what is best for the people in our community."

Also part of the committee is former transportation engineer Gary Bourne. The Sun City resident retired from the Arizona Department of Transportation in 1983.

"Peoria will turn into another Bell Road and we don't want that," Mr. Bourne warned at last week's board meeting.

Ms. Painter said Mr. Bourne's attempts to speak with Mr. Stolt have been fruitless.

"It's like Tom (Stolt) doesn't want to have anything to do with him," she said.

She said the transportation committee can have a positive effect.

"This group has really taken the bull by the horns," Ms. Painter said. "Petitions are being circulated — we're going to let the powers that be at the county know how we feel about this."

"I can't figure out what we have to gain, but I'm sure we have plenty to lose," she added.

At the meeting, Mr. Stolt maintained Sun City does not own its own roads.

"Basically, the county can do what it wants," the board president said.

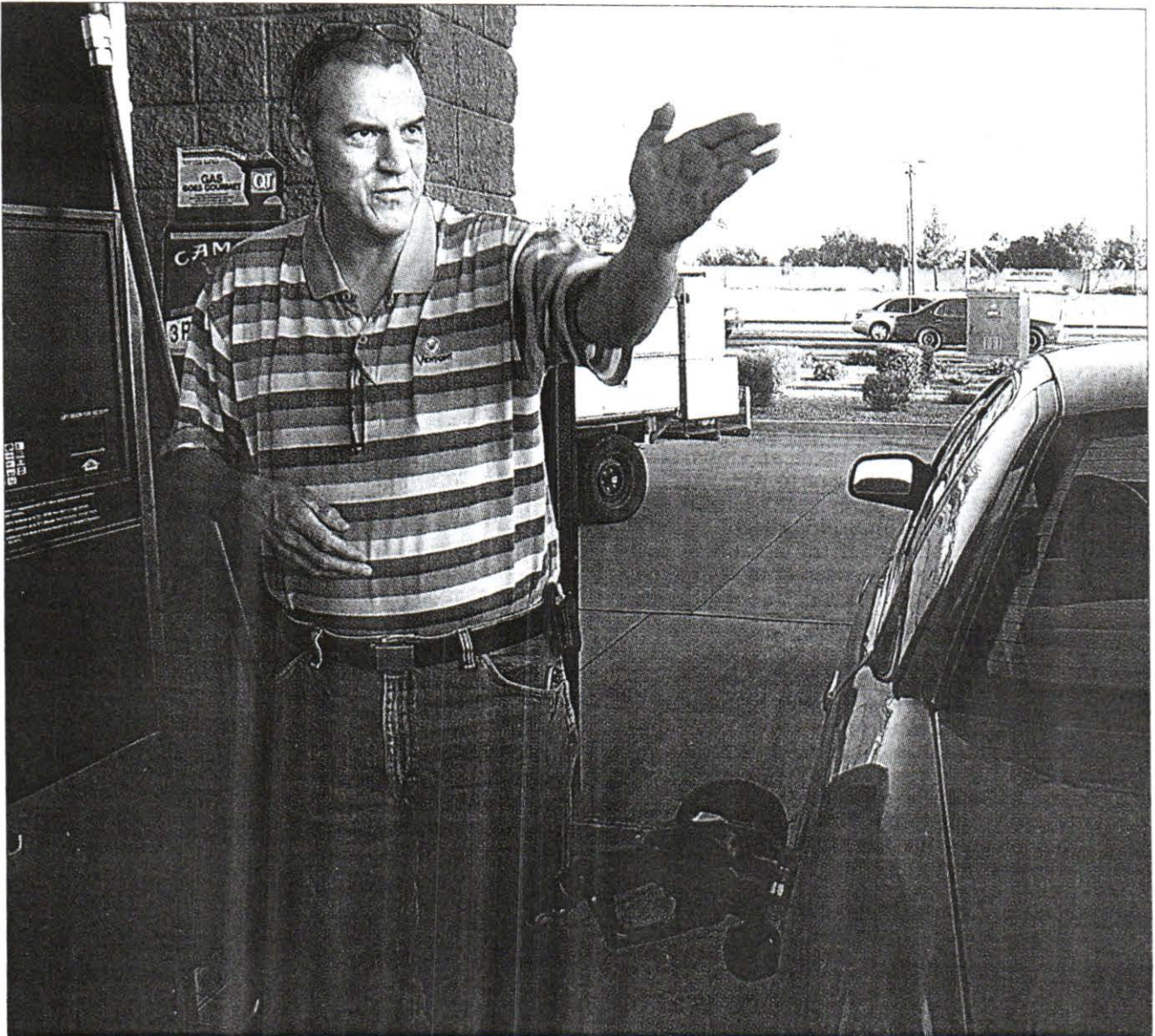
Mr. Bourne has an alternate plan in mind — building a free-way near Northern Avenue that would link Loop 101 to Loop 303.

"This is the best way to handle the traffic growth we can expect in the next two decades," he said.

The issue was revisited at a pair of transportation meetings Nov. 14-15. Check next week's Independent for a full report on the meetings.

Post your comments on this issue at <http://newsblog.info/0302>. Reach News Editor Matt Loeschman at 972-6101 or mloeschman@newszap.com.

A GRAND PROBLEM



STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Above, Ron Thompson of Wittman drives Grand Avenue to work in Glendale daily. He said with the area growing and the infrastructure the way it is the traffic congestion many face on Grand and Bell Road was bound to happen. Right, westbound traffic along Grand in a rearview mirror from 105th Avenue during the 5 p.m. commute.



MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

MCSO tags top 5 accident spots

Fender benders reported all along Bell Road

By Cecilia Chan

Independent Newspapers

Five intersections top the list in reported roadway accidents, in Sun City.

The intersections are 99th Avenue and Bell Road, 99th Avenue and Thunderbird Boulevard, 107th and Grand avenues, 99th and Grand avenues and Bell Road and Boswell Boulevard, said Capt. Ron Stoner of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office. All the intersections have signal lights.

"All the intersections are near businesses," said Capt. Stoner. "Due to the high volume of businesses done at the locations of the intersections you will have high accident rates."

A majority of accidents at the intersections occur when a motorist runs a red light or

when making a left turn, he said.

Although more cars lead to more chances of an accident at an intersection, age also is a contributing factor.

"There is a higher rate of accidents because of the age of the population out here," Capt. Stoner said. "When you get older, your response and eyesight are failing."

Motorists also should be on the alert when driving at intersections along Bell Road in Surprise

The Surprise Police Department last month announced a spike in accidents for this year.

Police Chief Daniel Hughes reported 380 total accidents for 2003 and 407 accidents halfway through this year.

Accident

Continued From Page 1

The top 10 accident sites in Surprise last year occurred at all intersections along Bell Road.

As a result, the department launched a roadway safety campaign.

"Citations alone are not going to slow people down," Chief Hughes said. "So we are looking at different ways of enforcement and education to bring these numbers down."

The department plans to promote driver safety through several means including education at the city's high school, the Citizens Patrol and signs posted at major intersections.

Officials said another possibility is photo radar installed along Bell Road in the future.

Matt Loeschman contributed to this story.

Post your comments on this issue at newsblog.info/0302

News editor Cecilia Chan can be reached at 972-6101 or cchan@newszap.com

See Accident — Page 7

103rd Avenue crossing due for upgrade

BOSWELL MEMORIAL: Detour to divert traffic to 99th Avenue during March work

JOHN SOKOLICH
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Residents accustomed to using Grand and 103rd avenues for hospital access should plan for a longer drive come mid-March.

The railroad crossing on 103rd will be torn up between Grand and Santa Fe Drive for two weeks — March 18-29 — for crossing and road improvements. The construction will mirror upgrades to the 107th Avenue crossing last year.

The improvements to 103rd are welcome, but concerns about Boswell

Memorial Hospital traffic persist. At a Sun City Home Owners Association meeting Wednesday afternoon, representatives from the Maricopa County Department of Transportation met with local emergency agencies and governing bodies to discuss options to make the temporary street closure acceptable.

To hammer out the details, MCDOT officials said they would put up various detour signs that would divert 103rd Avenue traffic to 99th Avenue. To get back to 103rd, traffic would be sent from 99th west on

Thunderbird Boulevard, where hospital access could be gained either from Thunderbird or 103rd.

“Our main concern when doing a detour is making it simple for traffic to follow,” said James Newman of MCDOT. “But we can put up signs for the hospital, which should be helpful.”

Capt. Ron Stoner of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office said he is willing to lend his deputies to help the Arizona Department of Public Safety if problems arise on Grand Avenue, which is controlled by the state.

At the 103rd Avenue railroad crossing, pavement will be removed and upgraded and a concrete base will be poured between and next to

the rails in the upgrades. Other improvements also will be made, including new curbs.

A sidewalk will not be installed, but provisions for one will be outlined, said Bill Grimes of MCDOT. The sidewalk won't be installed right away because there are some legal and liability issues that must be taken care of first, Grimes explained.

“If it's anything like what was done on 107th Avenue, this office has received nothing but good comments about,” said Gerry Unger, HOA president.

Notification about the upgrades and detours has been given to Boswell Memorial Hospital, as well

as policing agencies and the Arizona Department of Transportation.

Signs are expected to be set up several days before construction starts to alert traffic of the impending detours. Residents can expect construction to start on the intersection as early as 7:30 a.m. and last through 5 p.m. each day.

After upgrades on the 103rd Avenue crossing are completed, the same improvements will be made at the railroad crossing on 111th Avenue April 9 through 19. Detours for that project will send traffic to 107th Avenue.

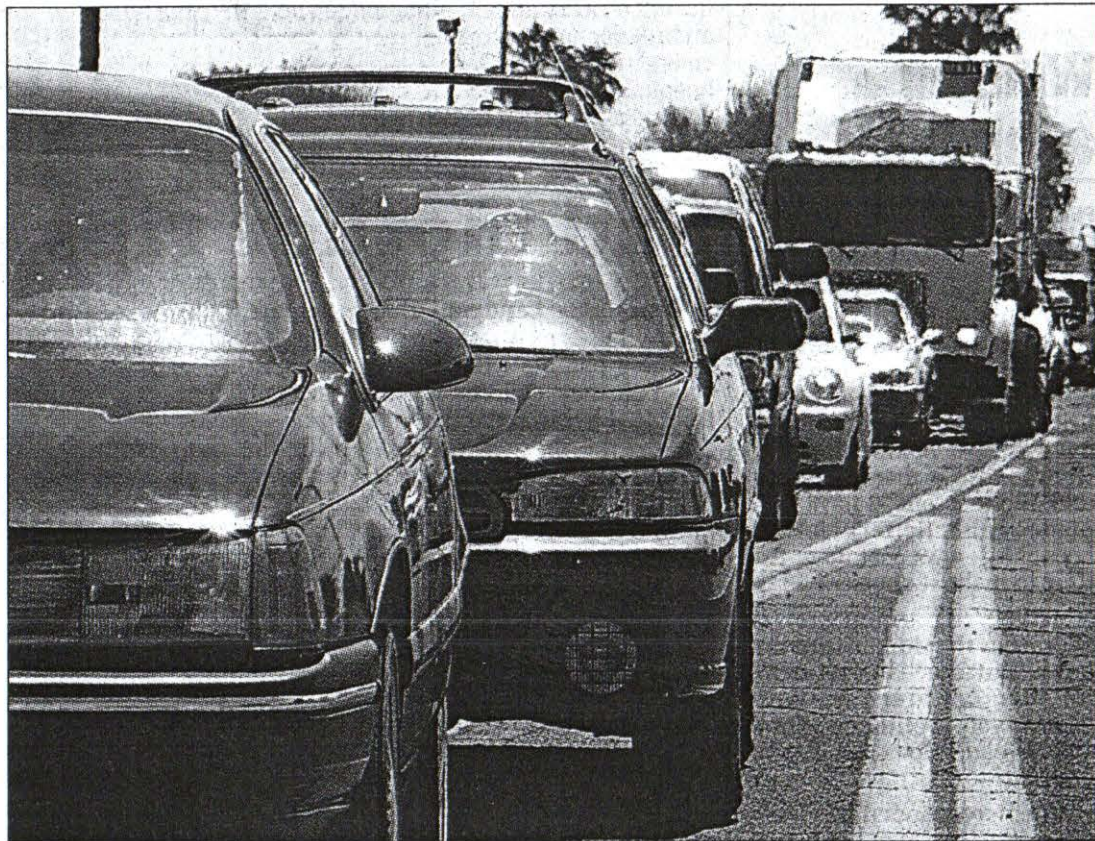
John Sokolich can be reached at 876-2526 or jsokolich@aztrib.com.

Daily News-Sun • Tuesday, May 14, 2002



PHOTOS BY JOY LAMBERT/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Hybenia Sholin sits in traffic westbound on Santa Fe Drive in Sun City. The congestion Monday led to added restrictions today, which prohibit left turns at 103rd Avenue.



Detour spurs congestion

DOUBLE WHAMMY: Bottleneck on Santa Fe leads to more restrictions

JOHN SOKOLICH
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The Maricopa County Department of Transportation saw the signs Monday and is counting on motorists to see

them, too.

Trying to alleviate the bottleneck of traffic on Santa Fe Drive and 103rd Avenue, MCDOT added several traffic signs restricting drivers westbound on Santa Fe Drive

from turning left on to 103rd Avenue. The restriction comes after a double detour through Sun City caused major traffic backups at the intersection Monday.

Monday evening, MCDOT put up the additional traffic signs restricting drivers from making a left turn onto 103rd Avenue. More signs also were

added at Thunderbird telling drivers to use 107th Avenue.

"We decided to make things a little more flowing and restrict left turns onto 103rd," said Frank Urquiza of MCDOT this morning. "All the left turn was doing is forcing drivers into a bottleneck. We hope with the new signs on Santa Fe and more

on Thunderbird that today will be a lot better."

Before the new signs were erected Monday evening, Betty Conway of Peoria said whoever devised the double detour through Sun City "needs to have their head examined."

See MCDOT restricts, A5

OVER

From A1

"It's just a mess," Conway said as she sat in traffic on Santa Fe Drive Monday morning. "I follow the signs to get onto the loop and then I run into a roadblock."

Many other drivers using the detour said they also were fed up with the traffic, but they will have to endure it through Wednesday as scheduling conflicts forced vehicles from 99th Avenue to 103rd or Del Webb Boulevard. The detours will be merged together until Wednesday evening when construction upgrades to the railroad tracks on 99th Avenue, north of Grand, are expected to be completed.

The traffic backup is the result of the Maricopa County Department of Transportation closing a portion of 99th Avenue north of Grand Avenue for railroad construction at the same time the Arizona Department of Transportation is re-routng Loop 101 traffic to 99th Avenue.

Once notified of the detoured detour, traffic technicians from the county and

state decided to put up signs to notify drivers of the double re-routing and directed traffic to Del Webb Boulevard because it is the widest arterial street and can handle the increased traffic better than 103rd Avenue.

Recommendations be doomed, though, as traffic started backing up on Santa Fe Drive as early as 7:30 a.m. Monday, as drivers on 99th bypassed Thunderbird and headed into a roadblock at the railroad tracks.

"I've been using the detour to 99th Avenue for a couple of weeks now, I didn't think it would suddenly change overnight," said Craig Nugabauer of Peoria. "I've been waiting to get to 103rd for 10 minutes now."

Nugabauer was caught using Santa Fe Drive Monday morning, which is a quasi frontage road of Grand Avenue between 99th and 103rd avenues.

For Sun City residents using Santa Fe, however, those asked about the detour said a little patience goes a long way.

"It's just patience when

they do things like this in Sun City or any other city for that matter," said Hybenia Sholin of Sun City as she waited in traffic to get onto 103rd Avenue. "I didn't realize the detour was closing access to Grand, but it's not that bad."

Beverly Brown of Sun City, who said she uses Santa Fe Drive on a regular basis, said the traffic is heavy but "it's all in the name of progress."

"It's for a good cause so you just have to give yourself a little extra time," she said. "I live on 99th and Thunderbird and thought I'd avoid the traffic by using Santa Fe, but it's ending up taking me a long time to get to my hairdresser's today."

Traffic officials who tried to compensate for the double detour last week said they were trying to urge all drivers to use Thunderbird to Del Webb Boulevard, but the urging went unnoticed by some drivers.

Several tractor trailer trucks fought their way down Santa Fe Drive to get onto 103rd Avenue Monday. The trucks were greeted by long

waits at the intersection as traffic controllers needed to stop all traffic on 103rd to allow the long trucks room to maneuver their way onto the tight road.

"I just wasn't paying attention," said Mike Mero, a truck driver on Santa Fe Monday. "I should have taken Thunderbird. It's not the traffic I'm worried about at this point, but the turn is going to be pretty tight."

Mero made the left turn onto 103rd without incident, but held up traffic for several minutes as flagmen stopped 103rd Avenue traffic.

Although little consolation to the drivers inching their way through the re-routing Monday, the double detour is a result of two transportation jurisdictions scheduling work without consulting one another.

Traffic officials for the state and county said the double detour is the result of not scheduling projects together and will work to not have such a conflict again.

John Sokolich can be reached at 876-2526 or jsokolich@aztrib.com.

Growth accelerates gridlock

WEST VALLEY:
No major projects planned to ease congestion

BRIAN POWELL
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Pat Mullen has one word to describe the traffic near her Sun City West home: Terrible.

"Sometimes it takes me as many as four lights to turn" on to R.H. Johnson Boulevard from Bell Road, Mullen said. "Bell Road is the worst."

Statistics back up Mullen's claim.

Traffic on Bell Road at the 99th Avenue intersection in Sun City has increased by 70 percent since 1993, said Julie White, a Maricopa County Department of Transportation spokeswoman.

According to figures from MCDOT, 26,442 cars per day travel west or east on Bell Road through the intersection in February 1993. In February 2001, the number was 44,842.

Despite the increase, White said little can be done to improve the traffic flow through the Sun Cities. Except for some intersection improvements, there are no



JOY LAMBERT/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Traffic is typically bumper to bumper on Bell Road in the West Valley.

major projects planned, she said.

Mullen will receive some relief when winter visitors leave, but for now her drive from Sun City West to the Valley Beauty Salon at 99th Avenue and Thunderbird

Boulevard in Sun City takes 25 minutes.

"There's no way for me to avoid it," she said.

Much of the increase in traffic can be attributed to the growth of Surprise, which has two thoroughfares —

Grand Avenue and Bell Road — that connect with Loop 101.

"We certainly need an (Agua Fria) River crossing, but the options are out of our city," said Ellis Perl, Surprise city engineer. "In the four

years I've been here, cars have increased drastically on Bell Road, with considerable backups when the snowbirds are here."

Perl said some improvements can be made to Bell Road from the eastern city

limit to Grand Avenue by adding appropriate turning lanes at major intersections. Perl points to the completion of Loop 303 as a long-term solution.

Roberta Crowe, a Maricopa County Department of Transportation spokeswoman, said projections indicate a six-lane freeway will not be needed in the next 10 years. Instead, Loop 303 is being constructed in interim phases.

The first phase of Loop 303 is a two-lane stretch from Clearview Boulevard to Grand Avenue that bisects Sun City Grand. The project is expected to be completed this spring, Crowe said.

The next phase from Grand Avenue to El Mirage Road, including the opening of the Grand Avenue interchange, is expected to be finished in April 2003. Construction on this four-lane stretch to the north of Sun City West is scheduled to begin this summer, Crowe said.

Construction could begin on a four-lane road from El Mirage Road east to Lake Pleasant Road, including a bridge over the Agua Fria River, by the end of the year. Funding for construction along the Happy Valley Road

See Traffic strains, A5

OVER

From A1

alignment is dependent on developers. No construction date has been set, Crowe said.

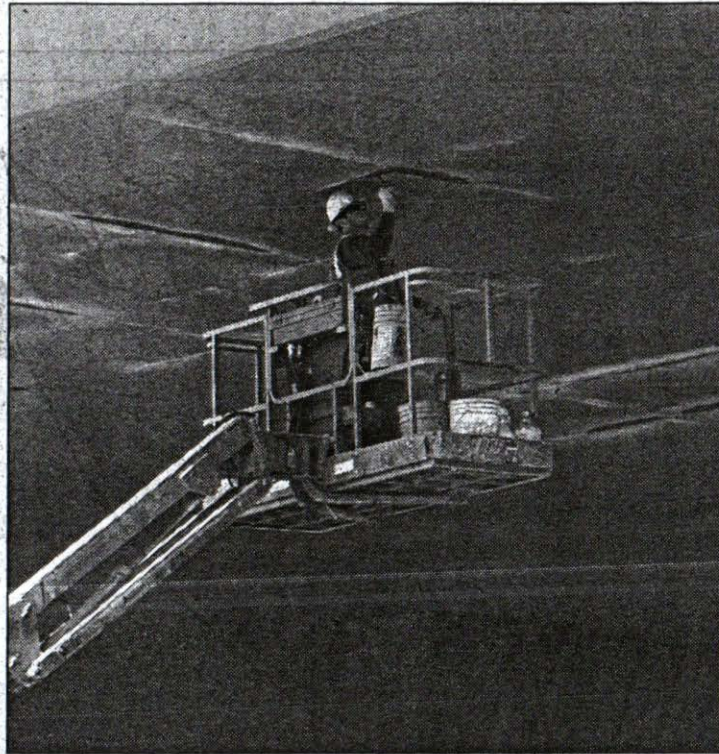
Long-term plans call for Loop 303 to be a six-lane freeway that travels through Surprise, north of Sun City West, north along the west side of the Agua Fria River and east at Lone Mountain Road until intersecting Interstate 17.

Today, the only Northwest Valley freeway is Loop 101. Although the population growth is continuing, additional lanes will not be added for at least five years, said Matt Burdick, an Arizona Department of Transportation spokesman.

"When it was designed, the median was left open for a future carpool lane in each direction, but there is no project planned for at least five years," Burdick said.

Sun Citians and Surprise residents share Bell Road and Loop 101 with Peoria and Glendale residents, who struggle with their own traffic problems.

Gloria Johnson commutes to work at the Valley Beauty Salon at 99th Avenue and Thunderbird Boulevard by taking Thunderbird Road from 75th Avenue near her home in Peoria.



JOY LAMBERT/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Work continues on the overpass of the Loop 303 extension under construction at Grand Avenue. The first phase of Loop 303 is a two-lane stretch from Clearview Boulevard to Grand Avenue that bisects Sun City Grand. The project is expected to be completed this spring and is expected to help ease congestion on West Valley roads.

"Thunderbird has gotten to be a real mess," Johnson said. "It's picked up a lot, especially in the last two years."

Dave Moody, Peoria's public works and engineering

director, said residents in the fast-growing northwest area of the city have some of the worst traffic problems. Commuters in that area have only three ways to reach Loop 101 — Deer Valley to 75th Avenue

and 75th Avenue to Loop 101; 83rd Avenue to Union Hills and to the freeway; or 91st Avenue south to Bell Road to the loop.

"It's just overload," Moody said.

Moody said the city is working with Glendale on a number of projects, including the construction of a bridge on Deer Valley over the New River and the widening of the bridge on Union Hills over the river.

Jim Book, Glendale's transportation director, said he's concerned with the number of homes being built north of Union Hills Drive, especially considering the only continuous east-west arterial between Loop 101 and Carefree Highway is Happy Valley Road, which does not have a river crossing.

"When you look at it, it's giving us real problems," Book said. "There's going to need to be other north-south streets and other east-west streets."

The one denominator linking all these areas is Bell Road. Surprise, Maricopa County, Peoria and Glendale officials all said Bell Road is built out between Surprise and 51st Avenue. Only the occasional turn lane may be added.

Brian Powell may be reached at 876-2531 or bpowell@aztrib.com.

Daily News-Sun • Tuesday, Jan. 29, 2002

Area traffic fatalities lack common thread

NORTHWEST VALLEY: But all 3 victims were Sun City West residents

JOHN SOKOLICH
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The Northwest Valley has seen the beginning of a nasty trend — or perhaps just a deadly coincidence — already this year.

The area has had three fatal accidents in less than three weeks — and if the problem continues, it will take the combined efforts of three separate entities to combat.

The fatal wrecks came on roads in three different jurisdictions, making evaluation of the crashes, with the possibility of a solution, harder to come by. However, deciding the

crashes are part of a larger trend based solely on a three-week period doesn't make for solid conclusions.

"Having three fatal accidents in three weeks in the Northwest Valley is tragic," said Dave Reuter, Surprise spokesman. "But looking at how dangerous the roads are based on just three weeks doesn't give any real insight to whether there is a problem or not."

Transportation officials determine road upgrades to improve safety based on yearly reviews and not individual accidents.

"We look at crash statistics and trends on certain roads and regions for the year," said Matt Burdick, spokesman for the Arizona Department of Transportation. "Engineering the roads, though, is usually left up to the specific jurisdiction."

All three fatalities were Sun City

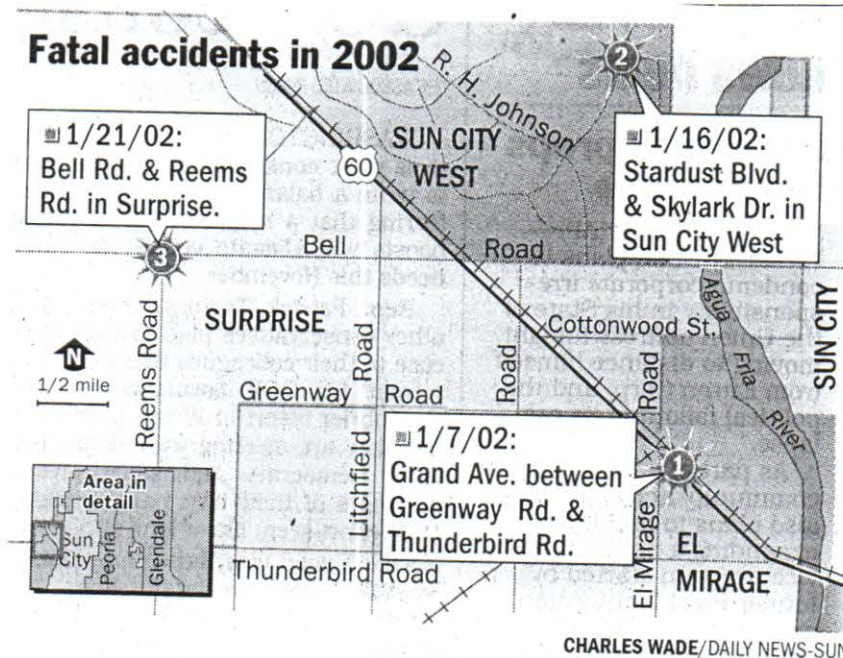
West drivers.

The first came Jan. 7 on Grand Avenue in El Mirage; the second Jan. 16 on Stardust Boulevard in Sun City West — the driver died in the hospital three days later; and the third occurred Jan. 21 on Bell Road in Surprise.

Although it may be an anomaly and not a trend, the statistics don't bode well for safety officials, who don't have a clear-cut method to improve the situation.

Traffic congestion with increased population in the Northwest Valley could be one factor, the ADOT officials said, but that doesn't necessarily tie the three fatal wrecks together. Instead, each was blamed on the driver doing something wrong rather than other factors

See Area traffic, A5



From A1

such as speed or high volumes of traffic, according to police reports.

"One accident at a specific intersection probably won't lead to any changes," Burdick said. "If there seems to be a pattern at a certain intersection, then there will be further evaluation on what can be done about it."

Another aspect to pinpointing a problem rather than just isolated incidents is that the three accidents occurred on roads governed by three separate jurisdictions: state, county and city.

It is up to the three jurisdictions — separately — to make the call as to whether the roads where the accidents occurred should be evaluated for safety and possibly re-engineered.

Julie White of the Maricopa County Department of Transportation said the county takes a proactive approach to road safety, but a single accident does not warrant a full evaluation.

"I call them incidents rather than accidents," she said. "I find that if drivers are doing what they are supposed to, then there would not be any accidents. Driver error does not always show the safety aspects of roads."

White said road design, which includes where and how signs are placed, is determined with driver error in mind. At a single intersection, where just an accident or two occurs, road design may not be suspected as the culprit. Population increases, however, have not been ruled out by officials who said increased traffic on Northwest Valley roads warrants a close look by safety personnel.

"The growth in the Northwest Valley is just phenomenal," White said. "There is more traffic volume on the roads, and I think with

projects compiled by the state and county, you will see some of the roads upgraded to handle the higher amount of traffic volume."

In Surprise, site of the area's most recent fatal accident, city officials are taking a proactive approach to road capacities.

"Some of what we do is limited by the state roads going through the city, but we are continually looking at road design to ease traffic problems," Reuter said. "There is a lot of interaction between departments, which sometimes gives us a heads-up to certain problem areas on our roads. That allows for our engineers to come out and look for solutions."

State and county roads also are evaluated, usually on an annual basis. ADOT's Burdick said after reviewing yearly crash statistics, engineers evaluate the design of roads as well as their speed limits.

Arizona Revised Statutes allow the establishment of speed limits on the state highway system "upon the basis of an engineering and traffic investigation."

Speed zoning in Arizona is based on the widely accepted principle of setting speed limits as near as practical to the speed at or below which 85 percent of the drivers are traveling. This speed is subject to downward revision based on such factors as accident experience, roadway geometrics and adjacent development.

The same practice is true for the Maricopa County Department of Transportation, which governs speed and road design in Sun City and Sun City West, the site of the second fatality of the year.

"Some of the codes and regulations are updated every few years, and we make sure our roads, especially the

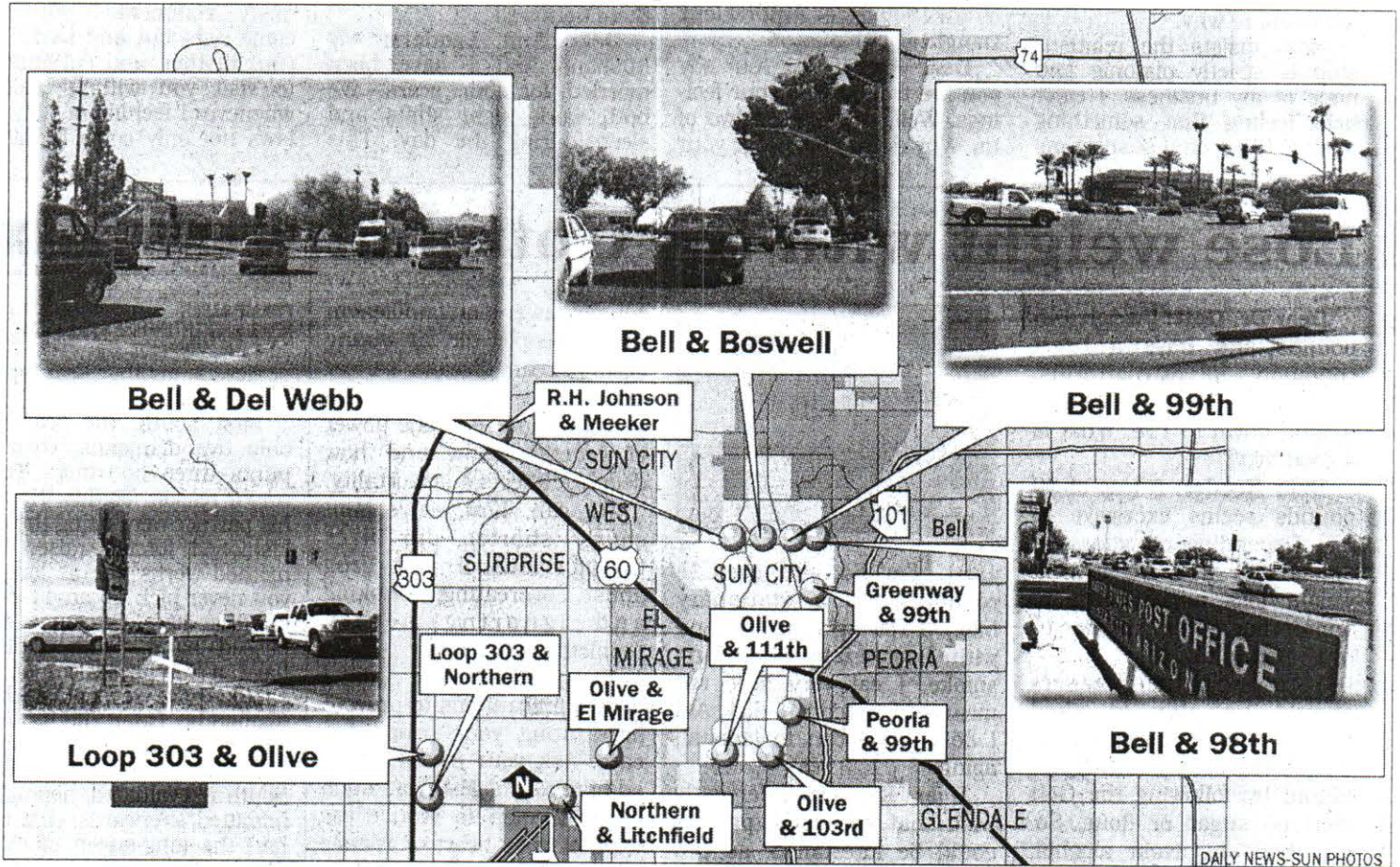
problem areas, are up to code," White said. "We are always trying to make county roads safer."

Because of collisions in the area, MCDOT has been looking at ways to make the Sun Cities' intersections safer, either by upgrading signals, adding new ones or improving the roadways. At least some of the most crash-prone intersections in the Sun Cities will see substantial work,

including signal timing, synchronization and coordination within the next year, according to White.

Despite the three fatal accidents in the first three weeks of the year, Northwest Valley drivers have enjoyed a week's reprieve. No major accidents have been reported since Jan. 21.

John Sokolich can be reached at 876-2526 or sokolich@aztrib.com.



MCDOT lists trouble spots

IN AND AROUND THE SUN CITIES: Retirement communities fare OK, but collisions indicate need for improvements

MICHAEL MARESH
DAILY NEWS-SUN

While the Sun Cities may have fewer dangerous intersections than larger communities in the state, they are not without their trouble spots, statistics show.

Five local intersections were home to at least eight collisions each in 2000, according to the Maricopa County Department of Transportation.

The Bell Road and 99th Avenue intersection ranked worst for accidents, seeing a 50 percent increase in collisions over 1999, jumping from eight to 12 incidents.

The intersection at 98th Avenue and Bell had 10 vehicle crashes, which made it the second most dangerous intersection in the Sun Cities, though it was an improvement from 1999 when there

were 11 collisions at the site.

The Bell Road and Boswell Boulevard intersection continued to have a high number of collisions although it dropped 25 percent to nine collisions this year.

The Bell Road and Del Webb Boulevard intersection logged eight collisions, as did the intersection at Loop 303 and Olive Avenue. Both numbers were similar to 1999 figures.

But Jim Williams, manager of traffic records for the Arizona Department of Transportation, said just because there are fewer collisions in Sun Cities intersections doesn't mean they are safer. If an area that's not busy has three crashes in one year, that number would be abnormally high compared to an area with high traffic flow.

Because of the collisions, MCDOT has been looking at ways to make Sun Cities intersections safer, either by updating signals, adding new signals or improving the roadways. At least four of the five most dangerous Sun Cities intersections will see substantial work, including signal timing, synchronization and coordination.

Gerry Unger of the Sun City Home

Owners Association said the Bell Road and 99th Avenue intersection has been slated for improvements by the county, but no work has started to date.

"What we wanted is a right turn lane from 99th onto Bell," he said. "The county, however, has a problem with the design of the intersection and has promised to make it better. We were told the improvements would get under way this summer, but I still haven't seen anything."

One of the biggest problems with the intersection, Unger said, is the merging of traffic into the left turning lanes on northbound 99th Avenue, and the amount of space between merging from three lanes into two.

"It causes considerable problems," he said. "Plans have been reviewed to do something about it, but still nothing has been done."

According to MCDOT, lane striping and signing changes are scheduled to be completed at this intersection by the end of August to improve traffic flow and right-turn movements.

Upgrades on the Loop 303 and Olive

OVER

See Accident rate, A5

Avenue intersection includes an improved roadway, a new traffic signal, additional left-turn lanes in all four directions, and the placement of advance warning signs to let drivers know of upcoming intersections.

MCDOT officials regularly attend traffic safety committee meetings with the Sun City Home Owners Association and Property Owners and Residents Association to Sun City West to discuss residents' concerns and to come up with possible solutions. As a result of one of those meetings, MCDOT launched a Traffic Safety Improvement Study to evaluate the intersection of R.H. Johnson and Meeker boulevards, although the study revealed no significant problems.

Statistics show there were four collisions in 2000 at the Johnson-Meeker intersection, compared to one accident in 1999 and two in 1998.

"The study found that the intersection was functioning properly with little delay experienced by motorists," Mike Brannan, MCDOT traffic studies coordinator, stated in a press release. "The Traffic Safety Committee agreed with the study findings that no improvements were necessary at this time."

However, MCDOT is updating the light signals at this intersection to help alleviate some of the problems, as well as adding a third lane to increase traffic capacity.

Nicolaas Swart, manager of traffic safety for MCDOT, said a program is in place to monitor all intersections in the Sun Cities to gauge if improvements are needed.

Overall, though, research shows collisions are less likely to occur in the Sun Cities than in metro areas, Swart said.

"Generally our accident rates are pretty low compared to some areas," he said. "We don't have intersections that jump out."

Williams said 12 collisions

Intersection Accidents 1998-2000

		2000	1999	1998	Total
Bell Road	@ Del Webb Boulevard	8	9	12	29
	Boswell Boulevard	9	12	8	29
	99th Avenue	12	8	9	29
	98th Avenue	10	11	5	26
Greenway Road	@ 99th Avenue	7	7	8	22
	Loop 303				
	@ Northern Avenue	5	6	2	13
	Olive Avenue	8	8	9	25
Northern Avenue	@ Litchfield Road	1	1	2	4
Olive Avenue	@ El Mirage Road	0	1	0	1
	103rd Avenue	7	4	4	15
	111th Avenue	3	5	1	9
Peoria Avenue	@ 99th Avenue	6	5	6	17
R.H. Johnson Blvd.	@ Meeker Boulevard	4	1	2	7

for one intersection is quite low when compared to other high-volume intersections in the state.

At 19th Avenue and Indian School Road in Phoenix, there were 52 vehicle collisions in 2000. At 75th and Peoria avenues in Peoria, there were 20 collisions. And in Glendale at 59th and Peoria avenues, there were 36 collisions in 2000.

"Phoenix has busier intersections and therefore more crashes," Williams said.

Swart said it is difficult to explain why the Sun Cities in general have safer intersections.

The average age of drivers likely is one reason, he said, since statistics show most older drivers do not run red lights.

"Up to now, we haven't seen that as a problem," Swart said.

In addition, older drivers tend to over-compensate after they lose some of their physical abilities; Swart and Williams said seniors realize their deficiencies and have more common sense on the roadways.

"Older drivers (have fewer accidents) than the normal age group," Williams said. "They have a higher rate of failing to yield, but not at intersections. They realize their shortcomings so they are cautious."

"The number of accidents at an intersection is not indicative of the rate of accidents at an intersection,"

Swart said. "You must look at the number of accidents as it relates to the number of cars passing through an intersection."

The accident rate, he said, is defined as the number of accidents per million vehicles entering an intersection. Those numbers were not available from the Maricopa Department of Transportation.

"As traffic volume increases you will typically see an increase in the number of accidents, but the accident rate may actually decrease," Swart said.

The focus MCDOT takes, Swart said, is not to wait until accidents start occurring, but to react based on traffic volumes and projected growth in communities.

But that is always not the case.

Responding to two years of pleas from the Sun City Home Owners Association, MCDOT in January installed a traffic signal at Union Hills and Conestoga drives where a jogger was killed two years ago. Although the intersection did not warrant it at the time, development in the area did call for a change by the time a study of the area was complete, said Roberta Crowe, spokeswoman for MCDOT.

The signal is just one block from the signal at 99th Avenue and Union Hills, but was constructed because a study showed one was needed, said Crowe said.

"The Home Owners Association asked us to evaluate that intersection to see if it warranted (a signal)," she said. "We did launch a traffic study at the request of the Home Owners Association and the signal was the result of that study."

Williams said statistics show the majority of accidents in the Sun Cities are happening on more regional streets like Bell Road and 99th Avenue, which leads him to believe there is no direct correlation between older drivers and collisions.

"(The) population is no factor," Williams said. "The Bell Road volume is part of the reason."

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Bad news at 4 Bell intersections

By Brent Whiting
The Arizona Republic

It's probably a tossup which of four Bell Road intersections in the northwest Valley should be deemed the most dangerous.

All of them are in Sun City and along a nearly 1½-mile stretch of Bell.

The intersections, from east to west, are at 98th and 99th avenues and Boswell and Del Webb boulevards.

Each intersection, except for 98th Avenue, had 29 wrecks during the three years ending Dec. 31. There were 26 crashes at 98th, according to the Maricopa County Department of Transportation.

At 99th Avenue, the daily traffic count averages more than 54,000 vehicles, making it the busiest intersection of the four.

The number of wrecks comes as no surprise to Mike Johnson, operator of a Union 76 station at 10120 W. Bell Road.

"These intersections are very dangerous," Johnson said. "I'm concerned about cement trucks, dump trucks and commercial vehicles that come barreling down Bell."

He especially worries about elderly drivers who pull onto Bell, failing to spot the trucks.

"You get hit by one of those things, you're just dead," he said. "Seven or eight people have been killed since I opened my business in 1988."

Sun City Fire Chief James Sebert said elderly drivers may tend to misjudge the speed of approaching vehicles.

"Sometimes you end up with a mismatch there," he said.

All four intersections are scheduled for traffic-signal updates, said Nicolaas Swart, a traffic engineer for the Transportation Department.

In fact, all of Bell Road, from Loop 101 west to Loop 303, was the subject of a recently com-



Michael Ging/The Arizona Republic

The intersection of 99th Avenue and Bell Road (looking west on Bell) is one of four danger points in Sun City.

Dangerous intersections in northwest Valley

Location	Total accidents			3-year total
	1998	1999	2000	
1 Bell Road & Boswell Boulevard	8	12	9	29
2 Bell Road & Del Webb Boulevard	12	9	8	29
3 Bell Road & 99th Avenue	9	8	12	29
4 Bell Road & 98th Avenue	5	11	10	26
5 Loop 303 & Olive Avenue	9	8	8	25
6 99th Avenue & Greenway Road	8	7	7	22
7 99th Avenue & Peoria Avenue	6	5	6	17
8 103rd Avenue & Olive Avenue	4	4	7	15
9 Loop 303 & Northern Avenue	2	6	5	13
10 111th Avenue & Olive Avenue	1	5	3	9

Source: Maricopa County Department of Transportation

pleted traffic-management study, he said.

The goal is to improve the timing and phasing of traffic signals to make Bell safer and easier to drive, Swart said.

Other dangerous intersections are scattered throughout the northwest Valley.

In Sun City West, the hot spot

is R.H. Johnson and Meeker boulevards, which had seven crashes in the three years ending Dec. 31.

Despite the problems in Sun City, Bell Road is generally safe, as evidenced by Valley-wide accident statistics.

In Phoenix, the largest city, none of the intersections along

azcentral.com

Find out where the dangerous intersections are throughout the Valley at driving.azcentral.com.

Peoria and Glendale have their own dangerous intersections. **Page 12.**

Bell is included on the list of the 10 most dangerous.

In Glendale, the Bell intersections at 59th, 67th, 75th and 83rd avenues are among the 20 most dangerous, but they are not at the top of the heap. The most dangerous intersection in Glendale is 59th and Olive avenues, which averages more than 115,000 vehicles a day and had 141 wrecks reported in the past three years.

Reach the reporter at brent.whiting@arizonarepublic.com or (602) 444-6925.

Bell traffic lights to be synchronized

TRAFFIC FLOW:
Less waiting for red lights means gas savings for motorists

BRUCE ELLISON
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Driving on Bell Road in the Sun Cities area may be easier come July.

Not that the county has any plans to widen the already-overburdened roadway.

Rather than getting bigger, the road will be made smarter after traffic lights along it from Loop 101 in Peoria to the Loop 303 in Surprise are synchronized to allow traffic to complete a trip with few — or no — stops.

Roberta Crowe, a spokeswoman for the Maricopa County Department of Transportation, said MCDOT,

Peoria and Surprise are cooperating in the traffic speed-up.

"We have completed a traffic management study along that corridor," Crowe said. "The results are now being finalized, and we will implement signal coordination between the two loops by mid-July."

In addition to figuring out how long lights should remain green, the study also suggests how long left-turn lights should stay on, and has determined when changes in light timing are needed throughout the day.

Eventually, Crowe said, the road will become part of the county's automated traffic control system, with sensors in the pavement and video cameras able to look at troublesome intersections on command.

But that is about three years off, she said.

Because Glendale already has synchronized lights on

its part of Bell Road, motorists may be able to make it from Grand Avenue to 51st Avenue without being caught at a light if nothing goes awry, Crowe suggested.

"Once you get east of Loop 101 now, you should be able to run quite a way without stopping," she said.

That's if you obey the posted speed limits, though. Speeders will find their vehicles and light changes won't necessarily coincide.

Less waiting at lights may save money, too. And that's important since a recent study of traffic in Greater Phoenix has determined the metro area ranks seventh in the nation in terms of what residents spend on local transportation.

The study said that amount is about \$7,000 a year per family, with the biggest part being the interest and depreciation on a vehicle, about \$3,277. Other vehicle costs came to \$2,400



STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Driving on Bell Road west of Loop 101 could become easier this summer.

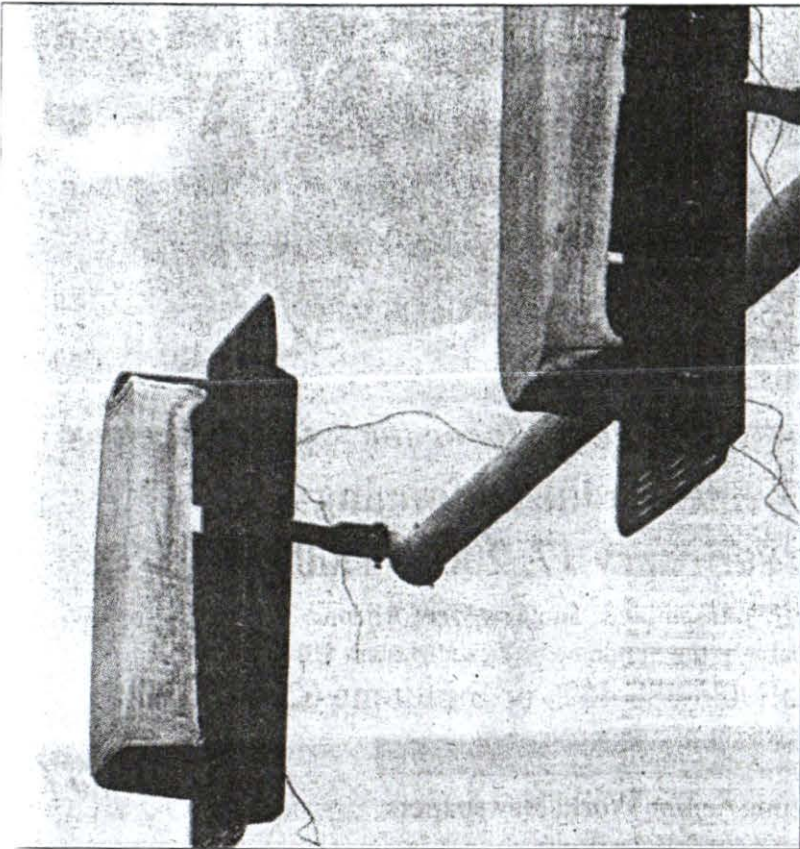
a year, while gas and oil were put at \$1.025 annually.

That would buy the typical motorist 17,221 miles of area travel, though that was computed before the recent spurt in gas costs.

The survey also found that 93 percent of all travel in the Phoenix metro area was in

cars, 2.7 percent on foot, 2.2 percent on public transit and 1.4 percent by bicycle.

The study, by the Surface Transportation Policy Project, looked at 28 major metro areas. Highest costs were in Houston and Atlanta, with Los Angeles ranked 15th.



JOY LAMBERT/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Traffic signals wrapped in canvas should be operational in a few weeks at the intersection of Union Hills and Conestoga drives in Sun City.

Persistence pays off

SUN CITY HOA:
County responds to plea for traffic signal on busy Union Hills

BRUCE ELLISON
DAILY NEWS-SUN

1-25-01

Responding to two years of pleas from the Sun City Home Owners Association, county road officials have installed a traffic signal at Union Hills and Conestoga drives, the place where an early morning jogger was struck and killed about two years ago.

The signal, however, isn't operating yet, and HOA's Gerry Unger said he's been told Arizona Public Service Co. officials want better street lighting in the area before those lights and the signal will be hooked up.

The Maricopa County Department of Transportation also needs to install in-the-street traffic detectors to trip the signals on demand from Conestoga traffic.

Roberta Crowe, a spokeswoman for the county, said the signal should be working within a few weeks.

And she confirmed planning is under way for an upgrade of the intersection of 107th Avenue and Union Hills Drive, where signals also will be installed, along with left-turn lanes in all four directions.

Part of that intersection is in Peoria, and the county will look to that city for financial help with construction, she said.

The increasing traffic on Union Hills Drive has concerned HOA for some time, Unger said. The number of cars on the road has risen sharply since developers built homes along the Union Hills Drive alignment in Surprise, from 111th to 115th avenues, and removed a barricade that used to stop through-traffic at 111th Avenue.

Unger said the light at Conestoga Drive, about two blocks east of 99th Avenue, is needed to

allow cross-traffic access to the area. The HOA wants to allow cross-traffic access to the area around Union Hills as Surprise drivers head for Loop 101 in Peoria.

Still another light may be needed at 99th Avenue and Beardsley Road, at the north end of Sun City, HOA officials believe. The north half of that intersection is in Peoria, so some cooperative deal would be needed, officials said.

Crowe said "that light is in the wish stage right now."

Union Hills Drive narrows as it heads west from Peoria on the east (near Westbrook Village), and sometimes is marked for one or two lanes, sometimes for two lanes, and sometimes isn't marked at all, as it is west of 107th Avenue.

"The folks at MCDOT are doing a study of that entire stretch that they control, and I think some major upgrades are in the works," Unger said, although he had no construction schedule.

Grand Avenue upgrade slated to start in 2001

By MIKE RUSSO
Independent Newspapers

Improvements to Grand Avenue, scheduled to start by 2001, are unlikely to alleviate traffic congestion in Sun City.

In fact, depending upon which of two options is selected for expediting traffic along Grand Avenue, Sun City may actually experience an increase in traffic volume, according to Brian Curtis, a civil engineer with the firm of URS Greiner Woodward Clyde, who was the guest speaker at a recent Northwest Valley Chamber of Commerce's breakfast meeting.

The reduction of traffic through Sun City has been a priority of the Sun City Home Owners Association Transportation Committee.

The two remaining options being considered to expedite traffic along the Grand Avenue corridor would use alternating grade separations at the six-legged intersections or Grand Avenue would overpass the eight affected intersections, thereby creating a limited expressway.

Mr. Curtis believes the latter option would "likely encourage more traffic and possibly more through traffic in Sun City since there would be fewer traffic signals along Grand Avenue.

"That might become a more attractive route for truck traffic, because there would be fewer stops," he said.

Improving Grand Avenue has been studied and discussed for years, Mr. Curtis remarked, now it is time for action.

The improvement project will eliminate the six-legged intersections, and eliminate railroad crossings at grade, which slows traffic flow.

The project is designed to:

- Expedite traffic.
- Promote development.

- Improve aesthetics of the area.
- Provide a statewide highway.
- Promote travel via transit, bicycle and walkers.
- Serve future traffic volume.

"In our study, we are assuming there will be a light rail transit to downtown Glendale by 2020 and eventually to downtown Peoria," Mr. Curtis said.

The eight affected intersections are:

1. Grand and 27th avenues, and Thomas Road.
2. Grand and 43rd avenues, and Camelback Road
3. Grand and 51st avenues, and Bethany Home Road.
4. Grand and Maryland avenues.
5. Grand, Glendale and 59th avenues.
6. Grand, Northern and 67th avenues
7. Grand, Olive and 75th avenues.
8. Connection to Loop 101 at 91st Avenue.

The Loop 101 on ramp would likely not keep traffic out of Sun City, Mr. Curtis opined.

The first option would cost about \$62 million less the other because it would require less right of way acquisition. "The length of time to complete the project would be about the same under either option," Mr. Curtis said.

The state has committed \$160 for the entire project, according to Mr. Curtis, with funds coming from Highway Users Revenue Funds and gasoline sales tax.

"The decision (on which option to use) would likely be made quickly to allow for plan design to start this summer," Mr. Curtis said.

"Preliminary design would start on the first two locations this summer and, hopefully, the contractor would start construction on Thomas Road in 2001," he added.

Truck traffic decrease ⁷⁻²⁰⁰⁰ down the road

IN THE WORKS:
Peoria plans to change routes in a few years

PATRICK O'GRADY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

When it comes to trucks — often hauling gravel out of mines in the Agua Fria River — there is not a lot that can be done to keep them off Sun City streets short of not having the trucks in the area at all.

The trucks have become a part of the landscape, so much so that

some in Sun City believe other jurisdictions have forgotten about keeping them off area roads, particularly 99th Avenue. With the opening of Union Hills through to the river and the gravel pits, it has hastened the increase of trucks cutting through to get to Union Hills and Bell Road.

"It's the pressure that comes from when the dead end was removed at (Union Hills and) 115th Avenue," said Jerry Unger, the Sun City Home Owners Association traffic committee chairman.

But that is not where the trucks are coming from, although they are ending up down 99th.

Once Union Hills goes to four, at 99th Avenue, trucks are routed to the road to reach Loop 101, said David Moody, Peoria's public works director.

"If a truck decides to go south, to Bell, there's really nothing we can do about that," he said.

The current truck route from the gravel pits runs along Rose Garden Lane to 107th Avenue, where it heads south. Drivers are directed east on Beardsley to 99th, where they are directed south to Union Hills. The route avoids sections of Beardsley where the pavement widens and narrows drastically.

The city will revamp its route

in the next few years by constructing Lake Pleasant Parkway, which eventually will tie together 83rd Avenue and the existing Lake Pleasant Road. The route, still several years off, will route trucks north on 99th to the parkway and then on to Loop 101, Peoria officials said.

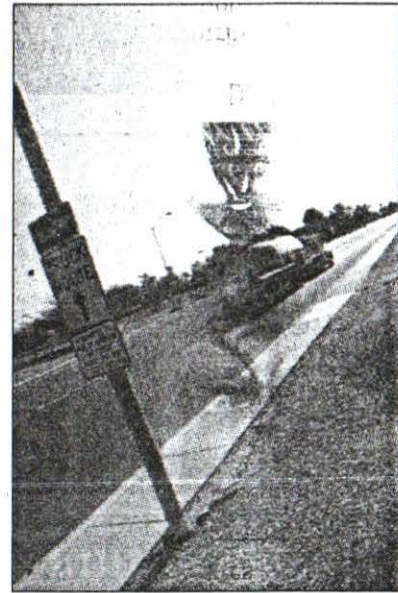
"We will do everything we can to ensure the trucks go north," Moody said.

The path also eliminates Rose Garden from the route, opting for a yet-to-be-constructed section of 112th Avenue. That plan has angered some in Ventana Lakes, who expressed concern at a January meeting unveiling the route.

"Nobody wants it," Moody said. "It becomes a question of who it will impact the least."

Maricopa County officials say they have received few if any complaints about trucks winding their way through Sun City. The county also does not have plans to post signs along its side of the Beardsley and 99th intersection to divert trucks away from heading south into Sun City once Peoria's new truck route is established, officials said.

"As it is true with any truck route, it is a complicated issue and it is very difficult to enforce," said Roberta Crowe, Maricopa County Department of Transportation spokeswoman.



MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Truckers frequently use Union Hills Drive.

Grand Avenue fate concerns Sun Citians

Increased traffic, pollution worrisome

By **MIKE RUSSO**

Independent Newspapers

If Maricopa County traffic projections are accurate, in less than 10 years, the main thoroughfare through the northwest Valley will be a not-so Grand Avenue.

Currently U.S. 60 carries about 38,000 vehicles per day through Sun City. That is expected to rise to 52,000 daily trips over the road by the end of the decade; snarling traffic to near gridlock.

Representatives of Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown met last week to discuss concerns about the future of the area's asphalt lifeline.

"For two years I have been working to find out what MCDOT's

plans are for Grand Avenue," said Gerry Unger, chairman of the Sun City Home Owners Association Transportation Committee.

"The last plans I saw, two years ago, projected traffic on Grand Avenue in Phoenix would be 37,000 per day; 32,000 in Glendale; 37,000 in Peoria and 52,000 in Sun City," he continued.

Part of the problem of determining what is in store for Grand Avenue is the fact that the Maricopa County Department of Transportation, Arizona Department of Transportation and Maricopa Association of Governments have all been conducting independent

transportation studies of the roadway, Mr. Unger noted.

"They are improving traffic patterns from Phoenix to Peoria and then they hit Loop 101," Mr. Unger. However, not much information has been forthcoming from any of the three governmental bodies regarding plans for Grand Avenue northwest of Loop 101.

"The long-range plan for Grand Avenue will probably include some limited access revisions," Mr. Unger observed.

Jesse Mendez, Youngtown's Public Works director, said the MCDOT plan he has seen does call for limiting access to Grand Avenue at 103rd and 111th avenues in Sun City and Youngtown.

Youngtown Councilman Ben Biery pointed out that limiting access at 111th Avenue would cause problems for the Sun City Fire Department if units from its 111th Avenue station had to respond to a Sun City fire. "They would have to go down to 107th Avenue to get onto Grand," he said.

Phil Garner, Sun City West Property Owners and Residents Association president, suggested representatives of all affected communities — Sun City, Sun City West, Youngtown, El Mirage and Surprise — meet and draft a letter to be sent to state and county officials, including Mary Peters, ADOT director and Maricopa County Supervisor Jan Brewer, outlining the group's concerns, especially regarding the stretch of Grand Avenue between Loop 101 and Loop 303.

Mr. Garner mentioned that not only is the increased traffic a problem, but it is causing greater levels of air pollution.

Sun Citian Jim Hawks, who spent 40 years in municipal plan-

“
Our problem is coming.
It isn't here yet.

Jim Hawks

ning, pointed out that new homeowners in the northwest Valley have to drive elsewhere to work since there are no industrial complexes being built in the region to provide employment close to home. And relief is not in sight.

"Our problem is coming. It isn't here yet," Mr. Hawks remarked. He said priority is given to communities that are already experiencing pressing problems.

One possibility to relieve the vehicular pressure on Grand Avenue would be the development of Olive Avenue as an alternate east-west arterial.

Mr. Mendez said the county is considering rebuilding and widening a two-mile stretch of Olive Avenue through El Mirage and repairing the rest of the road to provide that alternate route. Since a portion of the road has been annexed by the city of El Mirage, that community may have to participate in the funding of the project.

Other concerns expressed during last week's session were improved signage along Grand Avenue to keep motorists from turning the wrong way onto Grand Avenue from side streets and averting head-on-collisions like the recent crash that killed one man and injured three others.

Also, the problem of pedestrians jaywalking across Grand Avenue through El Mirage and Surprise needs to be addressed, Mr. Unger noted.

Sun City stretch of Bell will be viewed

LOUD ZONE: Monitors a result of homeowner complaints of heavy noise, exhaust fumes

HAYLEY RINGLE
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Noise and air monitors will go up in October along Bell Road in Sun City after homeowners complained about excessive noise and exhaust fumes invading their properties.

Maricopa County Supervisor Jan Brewer has requested the Maricopa County Environmental Services to monitor the situation. When the results come in, she said she hopes to help the homeowners.

"We are on top of this," Brewer said. "We've seen the monitoring is justified and will pursue some kind of resolution."

Many homeowners would like to see the county install a 12-foot barrier between Bell Road and their property, to block road noise and car exhaust.

Blaine Donaldson, president of the Sun City Home Owners Association, said he is happy to assist the homeowners with support, but cannot help financially.

"The monitors are a step in the right direction," said Ardena Taylor, whose back yard abuts to Bell Road at 96th Avenue. "I am very happy that Brewer is getting involved and appreciative with HOA."

Ardena and her husband, Hal, have been trying to get something done for a few months now. They have grouped with more than 15 families who live along Bell Road and are unhappy with the increased traffic that brings extra noise and exhaust fumes into their homes.

The Taylors are also working with Mike Foster, a private property ombudsman for the state of Arizona.

"I own that air over my property," Ardena said. "We will be pursuing this until something is done."

Until the results of the monitoring are received, Brewer said she is not sure what will be done.

"We have to do this step by step," Brewer said. "We understand there is a problem and will do everything in our power to get something done."

The county is also looking for a permanent site in Sun Cities and Surprise to monitor particulates in the Northwest Valley, said Warren Kusters, program coordinator for the division of air quality for the Maricopa County Environmental Services Department.

"If we get high numbers we will look for regional controls," said Kusters, who stressed that most of the particulates are automobile related.

Those controls may include reducing mileage by offering trip reduction plans and a change in the emission testing, he said.

"It wouldn't be anything specific to the neighborhood, but more of a regional problem," Kusters said. "The monitors are not made to measure a specific site."

Legislators talk truck routes, tobacco money

BREAKFAST SESSION:

Conflicting versions of plans for Loop 303 lead discussions

JOSH KRIST
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The Loop 303 probably won't become part of the CANAMEX cross-continent trucking corridor, legislators say. That was one of the messages four state representatives had for the 20 or so people, mostly from local governing associations and boards, who attended Friday morning's informational breakfast.

"Nobody has said the 303 will be a CANAMEX corridor," Senator Ed Cirillo of Sun City West, R-District 15, said at Brothers Family Restaurant in Peoria.

Cirillo explained that the CANAMEX corridor is just a concept at this point, not a roadway.

He said he's pushing for a bypass route west of Wickenburg that would eliminate CANAMEX trucks from local freeways.

"If we can do that I think that's where most of the trucks are going to be," Cirillo said.

Representative Mike Gleason of Sun City West, R-District 15, thinks railing against 303 becoming a CANAMEX corridor is based on misunderstanding.

"I think we're being misplaced when everybody fights CANAMEX," he said, but Phil Garner, president of the Property Owners and Residents Association, said he was surprised by the legislators' responses.

He said he thought a route must be designated if Arizona wants to receive federal transportation dollars for it, and said the Maricopa Association of Governments has been studying three routes, one of which includes the Loop 303 to Grand Avenue, Grand Avenue to Wickenburg.

"I think the main thing is the legislators are telling me it's a

concept only, unless I'm corrected differently, it's going to be a designated route, and that's where we differ," Garner said after the breakfast.

Cirillo heartily agreed with the proposal by Senate President Brenda Burns of Glendale, R-District 17, to put the expected tobacco settlement money in a trust fund. Gleason has previously gone on record in support of the idea.

The tobacco industry is expected to pay \$100 million to Arizona over the next five years as part of a nationwide settlement.

This is one of a handful of issues with long-term consequences for the state, Cirillo said.

"And if we handle them wrongly, we can do severe damage," he added.

Although it's tempting to create new programs with the expected money, it's wiser to spend the interest while leaving the capital alone, Cirillo said.

"You would actually have more money (than the original capital) to spend after ten years," by just using the interest, he said.

Representative Jean McGrath of Glendale, R-District 17, raised eyebrows and amens with some of the bills she's introducing.

"I'm running a bill that will clean up our dormitories at the state universities," she said.

The bill would require dormitories to have males and females on separate floors, and deny opposite-sex overnight visitors without permission.

McGrath is also hoping to pass a bill that would require education majors at the three state universities to pass a test in teaching phonics.

"This used to be the most literate nation in the world, and we've lost this lofty position," she said.

The breakfasts are monthly during the legislative session. The next one is Feb. 18, at Brothers Family Restaurant, 8446 W. Peoria Ave. Breakfast will be served at 7 a.m. and discussion will start at 7:30.

OVER



MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Blaine Donaldson, standing, and Byron Healy, both of the Sun City Home Owners Association, chat with legislators at breakfast Friday morning.

Daring drives put lives over line

NEAR MISS: Many close calls in Sun City have been caused by motorists trying to beat the train gates

JEFF OWENS
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The bells are clanging. The crossing gate arms are coming down. The train is bearing down only a fraction of a mile away from the intersection. Disaster could be looming.

It seems there's always a driver in a hurry who speeds through the intersection at the last possible, dangerous moment. It happens everywhere, and Sun City is no exception.

Neither the Posse nor the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad keep track of observed close calls with motorists at Sun City's busiest Grand Avenue intersections — 99th, 103rd and 107th avenues — but both know they happen too often.

"Don't ask me why they do it," said Master Sgt. Bryan Foley of the Sheriff's Posse of Sun City. "Some of these retirees — I mean, it's inconvenient if you're late for a doctor's appointment, but are you really going to risk your life?"

Bryan once observed firsthand a van trying to skate through the intersection of 99th and Grand Avenues as a train approached, only to have the crossing gate snap on the top of the vehicle.

What could be worth the hurry that a driver will challenge a moving train?

"Some of these retired folks have the damndest excuses," Bryan said. "It's amazing. Here's some guy speeding across Grand Avenue at 65 mph at 6 a.m. just to make his tee time.

"They try to anticipate the speed of the train," he added.

"It's silly. If we see them doing it, of course, it's a traffic violation."

Luckily, the silly practice hasn't turned tragic in Sun City recently, but close calls do happen.

"There are still those people who just don't get it — they think they can beat the train," said BNSF spokeswoman Lena Kent. "It's going on all the time — people are struck all the time."

The numbers are frightening: In the United States, a train collides with a vehicle or person approximately every 115 minutes, Kent said.

Improvement is being made, however: Grade crossing collisions on BNSF decreased by 14 percent in 1998, thanks in part to an aggressive safety campaign. It was a significant drop from the previous year, Kent said, "especially significant given the overall increase in train traffic on BNSF last year."

BNSF Operation Lifesaver presenters delivered 7,928 presentations in 1998. Those were given to kindergarten through 12th grade driver's education classes, adult drivers, emergency personnel and professional drivers.

"We've also put officers on the train, in which they would ride along and then they would radio to ground patrol when somebody has gone through an intersection or has trespassed on railroad right-of-ways."

The ground patrol units then issue citations to people in violation.

Foley said Sun City motorists are kidding themselves if they think the relatively slower and shorter trains heading into Phoenix through the West Valley pose no hazard.

"A train moving only 40 mph is still dangerous not just because of its speed, but of its size and mass," he said.

Kent agreed, saying "A motorist is 40 times more likely to die

in a collision with a train than in a collision with another motor vehicle, because of the speed and power of the train."

Engineers are required by law to blow their horns 1/4 mile away from an intersection, traffic or not, Kent said. They are not required to keep track of close calls at intersections.

Their trains cannot stop quickly: An Operation Lifesaver report shows that a 150-car freight train moving at 30 mph requires approximately 2/3 of a mile to stop. At 50 mph, it requires 1 1/2 miles.

An 8-car passenger train moving at 60 mph requires approximately 2/3 of a mile to stop. At 79 mph, it requires 1 1/8 miles.

There were 35 highway-rail crossing incidents in Arizona in 1998, resulting in four fatalities and nine injuries. Nationwide in 1998, there were 3,508 such incidents, resulting in 431 deaths and 1,303 injuries.

Arizona was not among the 15 states listed by the Federal Railroad Administration as having the most highway-rail crossing incidents in 1998.

The top five states on the list were Texas (322 collisions), Louisiana (214), Illinois (199), Indiana (194) and California (190).

Driver tips from Operation Lifesaver include:

- Don't drive around lowered gates—"It's illegal and deadly."

- Never race trains to crossings — "Even if you tie, you lose."

- Don't get trapped at a crossing — only proceed if you are sure you can cross all the track.

- If stalled at a crossing, get out of your vehicle and call local law enforcement for help.

- Watch out for a second train when crossing multiple tracks.

- Expect trains at any time — they don't follow set schedules.

- Remember that trains can't stop quickly. "It can take a mile or more to stop once the emergency brakes are applied. When the engineer can see you it is already too late to be able to avoid a collision."

- Don't misjudge a train's speed and distance. Its large mass makes it impossible to accurately judge its speed and distance.

Water main closes road for weeks

SUN CITY: Residents waiting for news on when road will open

KATE FLEITAS
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Esther Schindelar's trip to the grocery store is shorter than her trip home.

It's not the bags of groceries that lengthen her trip, but a roadblock in the westbound lane of Alabama Avenue between Cherry Hills Drive and 105th Avenue.

Schindelar lives on the westbound

side of Alabama Avenue in Sun City.

The roadblock was erected shortly after the Nov. 4 break of a Recreation Centers of Sun City water main supplying the North Golf Course. The main is beneath a median separating the eastbound and westbound lanes of Alabama Ave.

The roadblock keeps cars from falling into a large hole between the median and the westbound lane of Alabama Avenue.

"It's terribly inconvenient," Schindelar said. "When I come home from [shopping], I have to go down Oakmont and 107th to get to Cherry Hills Drive."

In addition to the hole, piles of dirt

line the westbound lane of Alabama Avenue.

Schindelar wonders when the road will be back to normal.

Road work will begin after the recreation center's contractor secures a permit from the county to work on county property, said Mike Miller, assistant golf manager for RCSC.

The county owns both the median, where the water main is located, and the road.

Miller said he believes the permit applications were submitted more than a week ago. He said he will not

See Water main, A5

From A1

know how much the repairs will cost until the contractor investigates the cause of the main break.

The county should have issued the permits on Tuesday, according to Henry Quinonez, northwest superintendent for the Maricopa County Department of Transportation.

Quinonez said his department was told by the recreation center's contractor that the repairs will be completed by Monday.

The North Golf Course water main break occurred on the evening of Nov. 4 between the 17th and 18th holes.

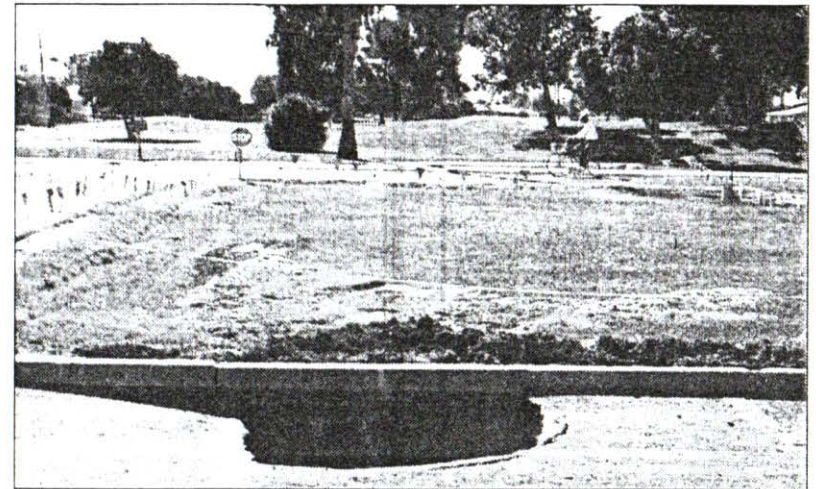
Representatives of Citizens

Water Resources arrived on the scene shortly after 11 p.m. They attempted to isolate the leak and realized the broken pipe belonged to RCSC. They called the emergency contacts at the recreation centers, but no one answered their calls, said Mike Weber, the water company's manager of operations.

When asked about the RCSC's delay in response at a Nov. 8 board meeting, Jim Warfield, general manager of RCSC, said the claims were untrue.

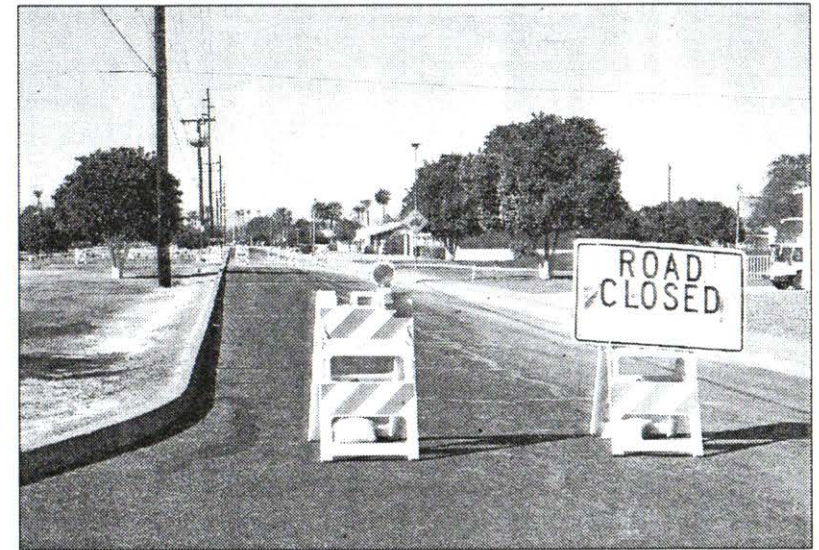
"They responded right away," he told the board of directors.

Miller, however, tells a different story. He says the golf course employees did not learn about the problem until they arrived to work at 6 a.m. the following morning.



KATE FLEITAS/DAILY NEWS-SUN

A water main break in early November closed Alabama Avenue at about 105th Avenue. The Rec Centers of Sun City is waiting for permits from Maricopa County before repairing the damage.



KATE FLEITAS/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Alabama Avenue is closed because of a water main that broke in early November.

TRAFFIC

Loop 303 concerns aired in SCW

Residents hear county's plans

By Lori Baker
The Arizona Republic

SUN CITY WEST — About 650 people attended a Sun City West open house to learn about Maricopa County's plans for the Loop 303 Estrella Freeway construction.

Loop 303 now is a 14-mile road between Thomas Road and Grand Avenue in the far west Valley. On the north, the county's proposed schedule calls for construction to start in spring 2001 from Reems Road in Surprise to Lake Pleasant Road in Peoria. Eventually, the freeway will be built from Lake Pleasant Road east to connect with Interstate 17.

Many of the residents took the opportunity at the Nov. 2 event to get reassurance that the county will not provide access from the western end of Deer Valley Drive to Loop 303.

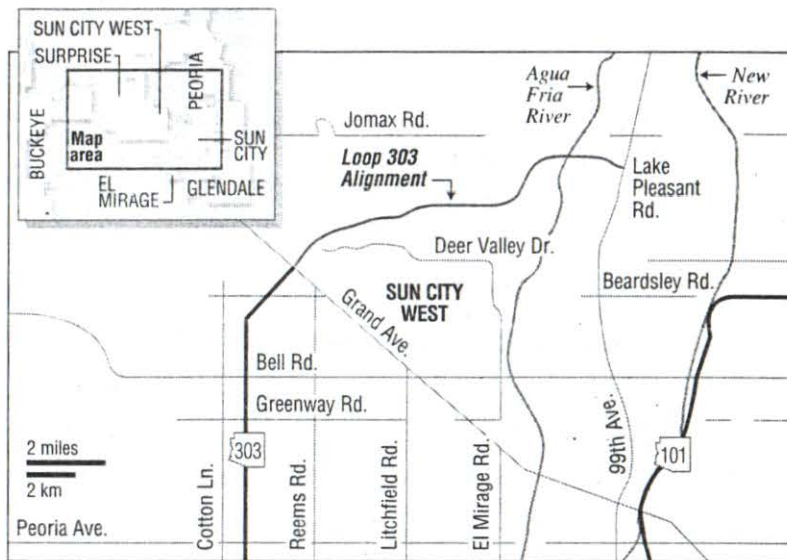
"People wanted to reaffirm in their minds the county's commitment to abide by the referendum vote," said Helen Carroll, a spokeswoman for the county Transportation Department.

Tom and Marsha Franklin, who moved to Sun City West about three years ago, were among those attending the four-hour open house who are happy that Deer Valley will not be connected to the freeway.

The Franklins are looking forward to the convenience of Loop 303 but are worried about noise from the freeway as it passes near Sun City West.

Phil Garner, president of the Sun City West Property Owners and Residents Association board, said board members are concerned about whether the county will follow state and federal guidelines about diesel exhaust noise from large trucks on the 40-foot-high freeway overpass over Grand Avenue west of Reems Road in Surprise. Garner said he is waiting for a reply from the county about the concerns.

Lori Baker can be reached at (602) 444-7120 or at l.baker@pni.com.



The Arizona Republic

VF

Loop 303 open house draws big crowd

By TOM BARRY
Independent Newspapers

By some time in 2005, Loop 303 will do just that: It will loop north and east along the far northern perimeter of Sun City West and across the Agua Fria River basin to Lake Pleasant Road, or 99th Avenue.

More than 550 area residents had an opportunity Nov. 2 to review plans for a proposed eight-mile extension of the roadway during an open house at R.H. Johnson Social Hall in Sun City West.

County transportation engineers say Loop 303,

also known as the Estrella Roadway, is expected to accommodate nearly 12,000 vehicles per day. In contrast, an estimated 40,000 to 60,000 cars a day travel along Grand Avenue and Bell Road.

"It will go a long way toward relieving the increasing volume of traffic we now have on the other roadways," said Mike Dawson, community and government relations manager for the Maricopa County Department of Transportation.

It will extend northeast from where it now terminates at Bell Road in Surprise, across Grand Avenue by way of an overpass, and east to 99th Avenue, where it will join the alignment of Happy Valley Road.

Construction is projected to begin by the summer of 2001 on the \$35 million project. The county has already acquired more than 50 percent of the land needed for the right-of-way.

As for a possible connection of Deer Valley Drive and Loop 303 beyond Sun City West's westernmost boundary, Mr. Dawson said. "The recent referendum among residents here wouldn't necessarily negate a connection at some time in the future."

The county has a legal obligation to provide the property owner with access to Deer Valley Drive as well as Loop 303, he added. "That doesn't necessarily mean we have to provide the best of all access."

But late last week, Supervisor Jan Brewer, Dist. 4, reaffirmed her commitment that no such connection would be made.

"Loop 303 will not be designed with an interchange at Deer Valley Drive," she said. "The people don't want it."

"The dollars (budgeted) would remain in an account, drawing interest, and if, in the future, the people change their minds and decide they want to the interchange,

the funds will be there," she added.

Mr. Dawson also said the Loop 303 project will likely be completed long before El Mirage Road is extended north from Deer Valley Drive. The developers of Lakeland Village, a 3,000-acre master-planned community to be located about three miles north of Sun City West, recently advised county officials that it will postpone the start of development for at least another year or more.

An agreement struck with the county this summer called for the developer to finance a three-mile extension of El Mirage Road from Deer Valley Drive to Lakeland Village, in addition to other area roadway improvements.

Delays in Lakeland's construction will effectively forestall work on the El Mirage extension, said Mr. Dawson.

SC Grand residents see Loop 303 through neighborhood

By BRUCE ELLISON
DAILY NEWS-SUN

More than a dozen residents of Sun City Grand in Surprise turned up Tuesday at a public meeting in Sun City West, concerned about the planned upgrade of Loop 303, which some only now have realized eventually will run through their community with as much as six traffic lanes.

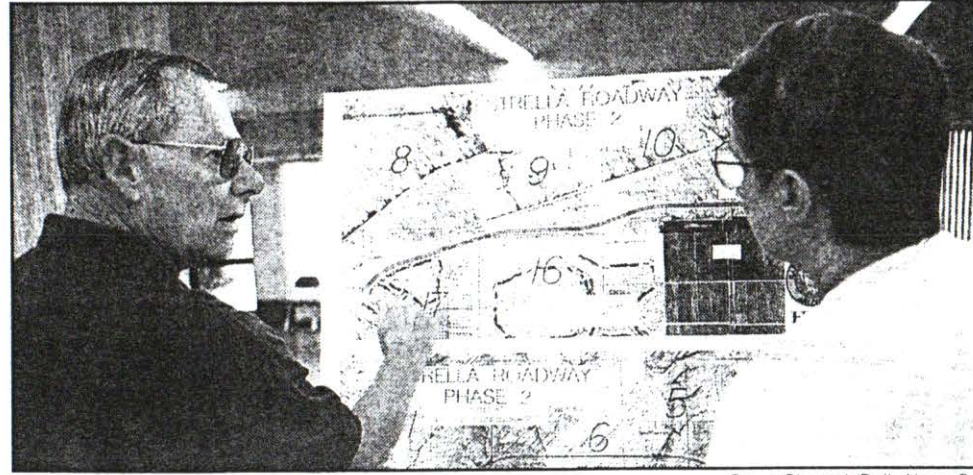
The four-hour session in the R.H. Johnson Social Hall was sponsored by the Maricopa County Department of Transportation to talk about plans for bridging Grand Avenue and the Santa Fe Railway tracks with Loop 303, and about how traffic would interchange with Grand Avenue.

MCDOT representatives and

engineering consultants stood at several stations with maps, aerial photos and construction drawings to explain the plans.

Overpass construction should start in summer 2001, and take about a year, they said. The cost is about \$11 million, with about \$2 million of that reimbursed by the state.

But Mike Dawson, MCDOT's governmental affairs director, and the others, were bombarded with questions about how Loop 303 will be upgraded in Surprise, south of Grand Avenue, about the now-dead connection with Deer Valley Drive in Sun City West, and about the planned interchange of the loop with an



Steve Chernenk/Daily News-Sun

Robert McCurdy, left, and Wanita Zarumba, both of Sun City West, discuss proposed Loop 303 construction at a meeting in Sun City West Tuesday.

See Loop 303, A5

From A1

extended El Mirage Road.

MCDOT spokeswoman Helen Carroll said two of the interested visitors were representatives of Phoenix Metropolitan Investors, a company which owns land between the now stubbed-off end of Deer Valley Drive and the planned Loop 303 route.

That company's executives have said they bought the land relying on assurances from the county that the interchange — which residents of Sun City West turned down in balloting Friday — would be built.

Among the Surprise residents who were upset by Loop 303 plans is Christine Hodgden, who says, "Del Webb people never told us that was going to be widened and made into a thoroughfare" like the one she saw on blueprints and in sketches.

Webb spokesman John Waldron said late Tuesday that Sun City Grand residents have been kept informed about Loop 303 issues at thrice-yearly meetings of all residents, who get individual invitations.

"The loop has been on the agenda at each of them," he said, though Webb officials, like residents, aren't sure of the final plans, which could see a six-lane road in 20 years.

"We've been pressing the state and the county to let us know what those plans are," Waldron said. "They've changed over the years."

Also wondering about how the plans would affect them were Howard Leonard and Meredith Suhr of Sun City Grand, both of whom have homes near the community's current west wall, about 150 feet from the present Loop 303.

"There's a noise problem for us," explained Leonard.

Leonard and Suhr both said they were aware that Loop 303 would be improved. "I can't plead ignorance," Suhr said.

But he urged that the Loop be depressed near Sun City Grand, to keep noise down.

"Now that they're letting us see the details, I don't know. I'm not so sure I like" what I'm seeing, Leonard said.

Plans for that section of the Loop do call for depressing the roadway somewhat so that low-level overpasses can cross the loop at Mountain View and Clearview boulevards, connecting the existing community with the planned phase four development north of the loop.

When those overpasses are built — at the expense of developer Del Webb Corp. as the loop is completed — access from those roads to Loop 303 will be eliminated, making Sun City Grand residents use either Bell Road or Grand

Avenue to drive onto the loop.

Waldron said the current wall along Loop 303 was designed as a noise barrier, similar to the wall on the north side of the Sun City West expansion area.

Residents nearer the Grand Avenue overpass, in both communities, seemed concerned about the height of that overpass — 32 feet from tracks to top of bridge surface — and with the sound that trucks particularly would make accelerating up that grade, which passes very close to parts of both communities.

"Sure, they'll hear something," said engineering consultant Mark Ratermann. "But with the soundproofing wall we've planned, it will be less than what federal and state guidelines allow."

The overpass soundproofing wall is about six feet high, "which will make the total

structure considerably more visible than we initially thought," said Carole Hubbs, president of the governing board at the Recreation Centers of Sun City.

Ratermann said construction would bring considerably more noise for the year it might take.

The bridge initially will have just two lanes, but can be widened to four or six later.

Its approaches will have a 3 percent grade, so that each side will be about 1,200 feet long.

The overpass will connect with Grand Avenue on the south side only, with two curved ramps that empty traffic from the loop to Grand. They will be signalized at Grand, which is also U.S. 60, the main road to Wickenburg, and a part of the planned NAFTA corridor route the state is building.

NAFTA is the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Grand Avenue will be widened to four lanes from the end of Sun City Grand to the existing four-lane pavement near Morristown at the same time the overpass is constructed.

Other contractors will build the additional parts of Loop 303 to Lake Pleasant Road (North 99th Avenue) in Peoria, at the same time, MCDOT officials said.

Written and oral comments at the session, which drew more than 650 people, were mixed on whether Loop 303 and Deer Valley Drive should be connected, despite Friday's 3-1 vote against the connection.

Some residents thought the Grand Avenue overpass should connect on both sides rather than one. But given the closeness now to the Sun City West wall, there's no space to do that without tearing down houses, officials said.

Daily News-Sun, Sun City, Ariz.

Wednesday, Nov. 3, 1999

Grand Avenue fixes planned

Eight-year, \$177 million project launched to relieve bottlenecks

By Mike Fimea
Arizona Business Gazette

After falling off the charts in the mid-'90s, construction on Grand Avenue is a hit again with state transportation officials.

The design of the first overpass at Thomas Road and 27th Avenue could begin as early as this month, triggering an eight-year, \$177 million project that will finally bring relief at the six-way bottlenecks that have bedeviled West Valley motorists for decades.

"It comes down to the availability of money and setting priorities," said Doug Nintzel, spokesman for the Arizona Department of Transportation. "The recent emphasis has been on our regional freeway system because people realized how important it was. Now it's Grand

Avenue's turn."

The Grand Avenue project is a combination of overpasses and underpasses along an eight-mile stretch between 27th Avenue and Thomas and 91st Avenue and Cactus Road. The so-called "alternating grade separations" will allow drivers to bypass railroad crossings that often bring traffic to a halt during the morning and afternoon commute.

"There will still be some congestion even with these improvements, but it (Grand Avenue) will be better able to handle the growth in Peoria and the northwest Valley," said Brian Curtis, civil and traffic engineer for URS Griener, the firm that prepared the ADOT study.

— Please see **GRAND**, Page 4



Mike Fimea/Arizona Business Gazette

Up to 36,000 cars per day pass through the six-way intersection of 59th, Glendale and Grand avenues, often delayed by trains and lengthy signal times.

OVER

— GRAND, from Page 1

Curtis said Grand Avenue actually carries fewer cars per day (20,000 to 36,000) than the main east-west and north-south streets that intersect it. What makes the drive so difficult are the train crossings and the lengthy signal times needed at a six-way intersection.

"The traffic corridor is at capacity right now. There's no room for more cars," Curtis said.

It's not as if Grand Avenue has been ignored by transportation officials. The road's odd diagonal alignment has been the focus of more than 30 studies over the years, Glendale Transportation Director Jim Book said.

"The studies usually concluded that we should spend a billion dollars to relocate the railroad and make Grand Avenue a freeway," Book said. "But the cost was prohibitively expensive. It wasn't

something we could hope to implement."

Improvements along Grand Avenue stalled after one overpass, at Indian School Road and 35th Avenue, was built in the early 1980s. Even though Grand was on the list of planned improvements to be paid from the 1985 freeway tax approved by voters, fixes at the other intersections foundered over conflicting priorities.

"It was a classic case of what was more important, expediting high-speed travel or getting some relief from the train crossings," Book said. "The biggest issue for us (Glendale) was the train delays."

Within Glendale, Grand Avenue extends four miles from 43rd Avenue and Camelback Road to 67th and Northern avenues. A railroad switching yard is at the midpoint, near 55th and Maryland avenues.

"There's only a single train track

north of Glendale, but it broadens as you go south toward the switching yard," Book said. "When there's a train on the track, you have no choice but to wait. It ends up closing the Maryland intersection quite a bit."

While Glendale officials and ADOT wrestled over what to do, expansion of the Valley's paltry freeway system took center stage. By 1995, then-Gov. Fife Symington had taken Grand Avenue off the board as ADOT began an unprecedented rush of building. Nintzel said that the 1985 tax has paid for 57 miles of new regional freeways and that 30 more miles are under construction.

ADOT took a second look at Grand Avenue in 1998. The result of its "major investment study" satisfies Glendale's concerns over train crossings while leaving the door open for future freewaylike movement at some intersections.

"It's going to be very disruptive,

but this alternative is affordable, and the new freeways will provide a lot of relief," Book said.

Construction at 27th and Thomas is expected to begin in late 2001. By that point, the widening of Interstate 17 and the connection of Loop 101 to Interstate 10 will be finished, giving west-side commuters two options when work on three other Grand Avenue intersections (91st Avenue and Cactus, 51st Avenue and Bethany Home Road and 43rd Avenue and Camelback) starts in 2002.

Nintzel considers 2007 "a key year" for ADOT. It is the target date for completing both the Grand Avenue improvements and the 142-mile regional freeway system.

"There are no plans for new freeways after this chunk," he said. "We'll have to concentrate on other things to get people out of single-occupancy vehicles — not just carpools, but express bus service and light rail."

Future gridlock



Lisa Goettsche/Daily News-Sun

Morning traffic clogs intersections along Bell Road at R.H. Johnson Blvd. between 8 and 8:30 a.m. Friday. Improvements may include widening Bell Road to six or eight lanes.

Officials struggle to control Northwest Valley traffic

By JOSH KRIST
DAILY NEWS-SUN

County officials say there will be one traffic problem in the growing Northwest Valley; sheer numbers that will overwhelm roads if something isn't done.

Tim Oliver, of Maricopa County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), said that with most jobs in central Phoenix or the East Valley, "There will be a southeasterly movement that we need to be aware of."

He said maintaining the grid system of Metro Phoenix is nearly impossible in the upper Northwest Valley because of washes and mountains, quick connections between major roads are essential.

MCDOT is projecting 1.2 million people in the Northwest Valley by 2020, Oliver said. The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) disagrees, projecting about 550,000 people.

"For planning purposes, we wanted to use that (higher) number," he said.

Many roads in the Northwest

Valley, including Bell Road, need to be widened to six or eight lanes, he said.

Phil Garner, president of Sun City West's Property Owners and Residents Association, attended the presentation at the Maricopa County Planning & Zoning Commission meeting in downtown Phoenix.

He said since he's on one of MCDOT's technical advisory committees, he's familiar with most of the issues.

"What I'm pleased to hear is what we've been concerned about: Bell Road and its limitations. It's going to be a problem," he said. "I was pleased to hear them say it's going to be an eight-lane roadway, that's what we were kind of alluding to."

MCDOT's study on Northwest Valley traffic should be complete by the end of September, Oliver said.

Anne Blech, MCDOT project manager, said the study may eventually become a policy guideline after a lengthy approval process.

"One of the end results from the

transportation plan will be projects for improving the roadway networks," she said. She predicts between 20 and 30 roadway construction or improvement projects will come out of the study.

She said there will be recommendations to not only widen, but do a "corridor study" of Bell Road, as well as Jackrabbit and possibly El Mirage Roads.

Although I-17 isn't included in the study area, MCDOT projected traffic density for the highway.

"Even with the low (MAG) numbers, I-17 is going to be a problem," he said.

Kelli Sertich, also with MCDOT, gave a presentation on county-wide transportation needs and funding options.

"The county is urbanizing," Sertich said, "we have to determine needs and figure out if funding is available."

She said current revenue sources fall short of transportation needs by \$1.1 billion.

Asked by commissioner John

Jordan what the County Planning and Zoning can do, she said, "Roads and zoning go hand-in-hand."

She also said that a property tax for transportation requires Board of Supervisor approval.

Now, most road construction is paid for by an 18-cent per-gallon gasoline tax, she said. She promised commissioners that MCDOT would make their needs clear.

In other commission business, representatives from Pleasant Valley Ranch, planned for near Sun City West, said they're willing to drop housing density to as low as 3.78 units per acre, for a total of 2,472 units.

PORA would settle for 1,732 units, yielding a density of 2.6 units per acre. The Sun City West Coalition wants only 1,467 homes, or 2.2 units per acre.

A public hearing on the subdivision is scheduled for 1 p.m. Sept. 8 at the Sundome Center for the Performing Arts, 19403 R.H. Johnson Blvd., Sun City West.

- SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT— JUNE 16-22, 1999

Traffic lanes reduced on 103rd Avenue

Residents of busy street are placated by change

By **MIKE RUSSO**
Independent Newspapers

Sun Citians living along 103rd Avenue, between 99th Avenue and Thunderbird Boulevard, are delighted with the changes made to their street by Maricopa County.

However, if Speak Out calls to the *Independent* are any indication, other Sun City motorists are not as pleased with the changes.

Maricopa County recently completed a chip sealing of 103rd Avenue and early last week restriped the roadway, taking it from two lanes of traffic in each direction to one lane of traffic and a center, left-turn lane. Additionally, a solid white line parallels the curb denoting a lane for bicycle and golf car traffic.

The action was taken by the county at the behest of residents along 103rd who were finding it increasingly more difficult to back out of their driveways, according to Paul Schwartz of the Sun City Home Owners Association Transportation Committee.

"It has long been a safety concern of residents along the route," Mr. Schwartz explained.

Speeding was the main culprit contributing to the increased degree of difficulty in exiting driveways, he noted.



Photo by MIKE RUSSO/Independent Newspapers
A pickup truck and golf car jockey for position at the intersection of Thunderbird Boulevard and 103rd Avenue where 103rd Avenue narrows from two lanes of traffic in each direction to one.

The wheels were set in motion for the change when the HOA Transportation Committee was contacted by three citizens claiming to represent many of the area's residents seeking help to rectify the situation.

HOA then discussed the matter with county officials.

"The county came up with a proposal to restrict driving lanes," Mr. Schwartz said. "Ninety percent of the residents along that stretch approved."

The proposal was made after the county conducted a traffic study and found the average speed of vehicles traveling that stretch of roadway to be 39 miles per hour, 14 miles faster than the posted 25 mph limit.

"Chances are if you have driven along there at thirty-nine miles per hour, you would get passed," Mr. Schwartz observed.

"The county will conduct another speed check and traffic count in six months to see if going

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It has long been a safety concern of residents along the route

Paul Schwartz
HOA Transportation
Committee

to two lanes has been effective," he continued.

With the travel lanes widened, some HOA board members were curious if the county would consider increasing the speed limit to 30 mph.

"The county will not increase the speed limit to thirty miles per hour because of all the driveway accesses along the street," according to Mr. Schwartz.

As far as Mr. Schwartz knows only residents living along 103rd Avenue were consulted by the county regarding the change in traffic patterns. If the Speak Out calls opposing the change are indicative of the thoughts of other Sun Citians, some people think the county should have expanded its survey before making its decision.

Daily News-Sun, Sun City, Ariz. Thursday, May 13, 1999

County studies traffic changes on 103rd

By TINA SCHADE
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Two lanes or not two lanes?

The question has been posed to Sun City residents living along 103rd Avenue between Thunderbird Road and 99th Avenue — a stretch dotted with landmarks such as Lakeview Methodist Church at the south and Sundial Recreation Center to the north.

On May 6, county traffic studies coordinator Mike Brannan sent out nearly 90 letters to people living along 103rd Avenue asking if they wanted to keep the street a four-lane road or change it to two lanes.

Brannan decided to pen the letter after a concerned group of neighbors living along 103rd began circulating petitions pushing for a two-lane road.

"We got about 58 people who favored the two-lanes," said Ray Jeremiah, one of the petition circulators.

In conjunction with the Sun City Home Owners Association, the group then presented their concerns to the county. "The Home Owners Association is interested in doing anything to slow down the speed on that street. ... I would think that two lanes would be a good solution," said Byron Healy, HOA president.

Some people also complained that four lanes made it difficult to back out of their driveways, Brannan said.

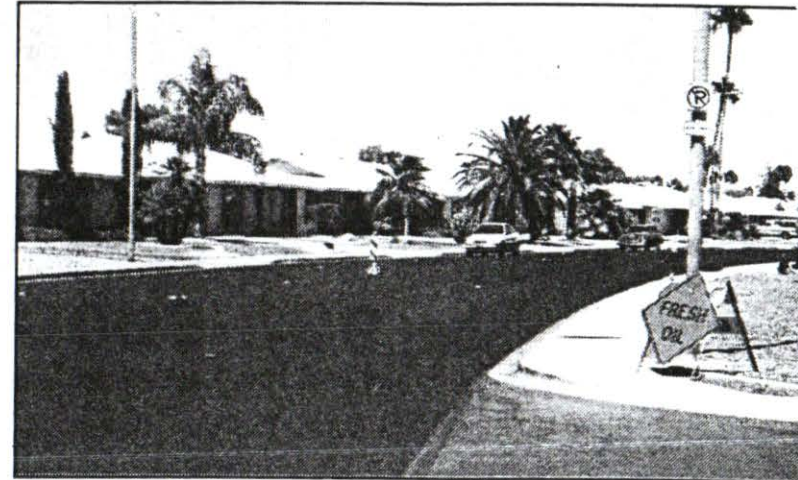
"You can't back out of the driveway because the traffic is so heavy. ... I almost got clipped a couple of times now," said Joseph Saputo.

Some disagree.

Marian Kern, who has lived on 103rd since 1978, said she has had no problems getting in and out of her driveway.

"I can't see what this is going to help," she said, referring to the two-lane proposal.

See Change curbs, A5



Lisa Goettsche/Daily News-Sun

Some residents along 103rd Avenue want the present four lanes reduced to two.

From A1

going to help," she said, referring to the two-lane proposal.

Doris and George Becker said four lanes work best on a road where nearly 7,000 cars travel daily.

Two lanes will "greatly hinder" normal traffic, the couple said.

"If two lanes is what you want, go buy your house somewhere else, not along 103rd Avenue," Doris Becker said.

If residents elect to change 103rd Avenue to two lanes, a continuous left-turn lane and bike or golf car lanes would also be striped or painted along 103rd.

Another condition of the

two-lane road is that parking would be prohibited along 103rd seven days a week, as opposed to the current five.

Brannan said it is an ideal time to decide the issue because it coincides with the completion of a 103rd Avenue maintenance project.

The Beckers said the issue should be decided only by those people who live along 103rd Avenue. "The community has to use it, they should get to vote on it," Doris Becker said.

The Beckers also are worried that emergency vehicles may have a hard time navigating two lanes of traffic.

Steve Morrow, assistant fire

chief for Sun City, said both choices will allow fire trucks and other emergency vehicles to travel freely down 103rd.

"I don't see any real negative impact from a change either way," Morrow said.

Fifteen years ago, 103rd Avenue was changed from a two-lane road to a four-lane road because traffic totaled about 9,000 cars a day, Brannan said.

A similar "traffic calming technique," as Brannan refers to the two-lane proposal, was implemented two years ago along Boswell Boulevard.

Responding to neighbors' complaints that traffic was too fast and

heavy along Boswell, the county made some striping changes along the road between 99th Avenue and Thunderbird, Healy said.

"We put in some larger speed limit signs and put it in more parking, which gives the effect of lane narrowing. We were hoping that it would reduce the speed limit," Brannan said.

Brannan said he hasn't heard any murmurs of dissatisfied residents along Boswell since the change.

People living along 103rd Avenue have until Monday to mail their suggestions to the county.

If a clear majority is not reached through the survey, the county will revert to the original four-lane plan, Brannan wrote in his letter.

County plans \$40 million in local road work

By BRUCE ELLISON
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Maricopa County will spend about \$40 million over the next five years on road improvements in the Sun Cities area — most of it on Loop 303, the roadway many Sun City West residents don't want.

In its five-year capital improvements plan for the period that started July 1, the county outlines 74 Valley road projects, plus 21 categories of expenses, such as disabled access and archaeological research, that aren't attributable to any specific road.

Some are small, such as \$170,000 for work on Castle Hot Springs Road, the dirt track that leads north along

the west edge of Lake Pleasant. Others, such as work on Loop 303, are considerably more massive. In its first phase, a bridged crossing of Grand Avenue and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad tracks, the county expects to spend about \$8 million on the bridge alone, plus another \$20.2 million to build Loop 303 as a two-lane road from Grand Avenue to Lake Pleasant Road, where it crosses Jomax Road in Peoria.

Loop 303 work is the most costly in the five-year plan, with a \$15.5 million bridge across the Salt River at 51st Avenue ranked second, and \$10 million worth of work on Gilbert Road between Mesa

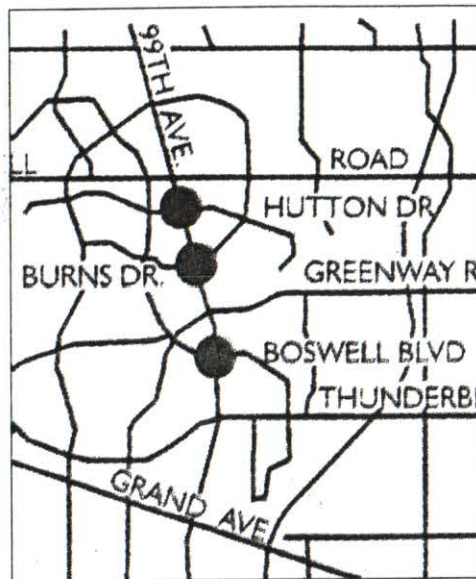
and the Salt River Indian reservation coming in third.

Rollie Haas, who lives on 151st Avenue in Sun City West, is glad to see work begin. He fought unsuccessfully in mid-1997 to keep a connection from Deer Valley Drive on the loop, in part to relieve traffic congestion in his neighborhood.

"There aren't enough ways out of the expansion area now," he said, adding that an east-west road is needed north of Bell. The nearest paved road is 12 miles north at State Route 74.

But Roger Cousin, who gathered more than 4,000 signatures in fighting Loop

► See Projects aid, A5



Map courtesy Maricopa County Department of Transportation

Three intersections on 99th Avenue in Sun City will be upgraded by next summer at a cost of \$1.1 million. They are at Hutton, Burns and Boswell, where left turn lanes and new signals will be added.

12-15-98

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OVER

303, said he still wishes it wasn't being built.

He anticipates it causing problems by bringing more traffic into Sun City West and is pushing to gate the community at the east end of Deer Valley Drive.

Under an accord reached with county supervisors, an interchange with Deer Valley Drive and Loop 303 will be built, but it will be blocked to traffic for two years, then opened only if Sun City West residents vote to have it in operation.

In Sun City, work will get under way this fiscal year on three intersections on 99th Avenue that will be upgraded with the installation of new left-turn lanes created on bridges over the drainage ditch in the street's median strip.

The intersections at Hutton Drive, Burns Drive and Boswell Boulevard all should be complete by late 1999.

Some residents objected to the traffic woes that earlier construction on 99th Avenue caused but welcomed the results once the work was finished.

In Peoria, the county plans to reconstruct 83rd Avenue from Thunderbird Road north to Skunk Creek and widen the road to four lanes. The cost: \$1 million.

Work also will start on what is called 83rd Parkway, a new road to connect 83rd Avenue at Beardsley Road to 99th Avenue and Rose Garden Lane, a half-mile north of Sun City. Done in partnership with Peoria, it will cost \$500,000.

The county also will rebuild parts of the bridge over the New River on Peoria Avenue a few blocks west of Loop 101. The \$1.5 million project will add pedestrian lanes and make the bridge safer for those in wheelchairs or people who have trouble walking.

North of Sun City, the county will pave about four miles of 107th Avenue, from Rose Garden Lane to Jomax Road, for \$3 million. A similar project will improve Jomax Road from 147th Avenue to 155th Avenue, where that road enters Surprise.

Both projects will benefit developers who have plans for housing in the areas bordering the Agua Fria River.

In Surprise, the county will spend \$100,000 to improve Litchfield Road from Bell Road to Grand Avenue. At the request of Surprise officials, that work was put off for a year, the county said.

Finally, Maricopa County will spend about \$170,000 to improve Castle Hot Springs Road from the end of the current pavement north for about four miles into Yavapai County. Although the work is outside the county, the dirt road does serve the upper portions of Lake Pleasant Regional Park, which is owned and operated by Maricopa County.

Peoria is in the process of annexing the territory, with final action expected by February.

To select projects for inclusion in its five-year plan, the Maricopa County Department of Transportation had public meetings and rated projects based on costs and benefits.

Construction work means road woes for local motorists

Staff report

There's a lot of work under way in Sun City that involves digging up streets and roadways, and more is planned.

Citizens Utilities will install a 12-inch main water line along Union Hills Drive, from 111th Avenue to 99th Avenue, officials said.

Construction should begin next week and be finished by Labor Day, said Bruce DiFrancisco, project engineer.

The pipe will carry water from a well near the west end of the line to the water treatment plant just east of 99th Avenue, across from the Mariette Recreation Center.

Water from Well No. 31D now is pumped directly into the company's distribution system without treatment, a process that makes the water cloudy because of dissolved air.

"By routing this high quality water from the plant, we allow the entrained air in the water to dissipate. This will allow us to maximize the amount of water we can withdraw from the well," DiFrancisco said.

But the line will have to be installed under the pavement on Union Hills Drive, thus disrupting traffic along that road, and at the 99th Avenue intersection.

DiFrancisco said the company will work with its contractor to minimize the traffic restrictions and inconvenience.

Elsewhere in Sun City, motorists will continue to encounter road work



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Workers install fiber optic cable for Cox Communications along Agua Fria Drive in Sun City.

that will slow their travels, including the reconstruction of the 99th Avenue and Thunderbird Boulevard intersection; and the installation of conduit for fiber optic cables by contractors for Cox Communications.

That work now has moved west on Cameo Drive, and rounded a corner onto Agua Fria Drive. Other parts of

the community also will see such construction, which eventually may extend into back yards.

The Maricopa County Department of Transportation advises that other fiber optic cables are being installed near Bell Road and 104th Avenue, and at Del Webb Boulevard near Boswell Boulevard.

They also are going in along Bell

Road west of Sun City, and may affect the 114th Avenue intersection.

The work is expected to continue in those sites for a month, MCDOT said.

At 99th Avenue and Beardsley Road, on the Peoria-Sun City border, sewer lines are being installed, with lane restrictions expected until Aug. 15.

Speeders beware

SC posse purchases radar system

By JEANNIE JOHNSON
Staff writer

SUN CITY — You're driving home from the Sundial Recreation Center.

Cruising down 103rd Avenue, you're thinking about what to throw on the barbecue for dinner. You're not thinking about how fast you're going. Zipping around a corner, you're suddenly aware of how fast you're going.

That's because it's flashing at you in 10-inch numbers from the back of a pickup truck. The Sheriff's Posse of Sun City purchased the \$2,700 radar system to increase awareness of speeds on surface streets.

"We've had so many speeders on quite a few of the key streets," said Dave Cody, commander of the posse. "We're just trying to remind them to slow down. We've had an awful lot of accidents and

several can be directly attributed to high speeds."

Cody said he sees the most offenders on Del Webb Boulevard and 103rd Avenue.

"Even though 103rd is a four-lane street, it's narrower than others," he said. "That's the reason for the 25 mile-per-hour speed limit. It's awfully hard to get out of driveways or even just across the street when people are speeding."

Some of the numbers popping up on the radar screen fly in the face of the image of the slow Sun City drivers, Cody said.

"That reputation is not always true," he said. "Some of the older ladies go driving by and don't even realize how fast they're going. They look over and they're doing 55 in 30 mile-per-hour zone. Although, to be fair, a lot of the offenders are vendors from outside the area."

Capt. Phil Babb said he is pleased the posse is dealing with the problem.

"We get a lot of complaints about speeders in the area," he said. "I think most of them just aren't aware of how fast they're going. If they see it out

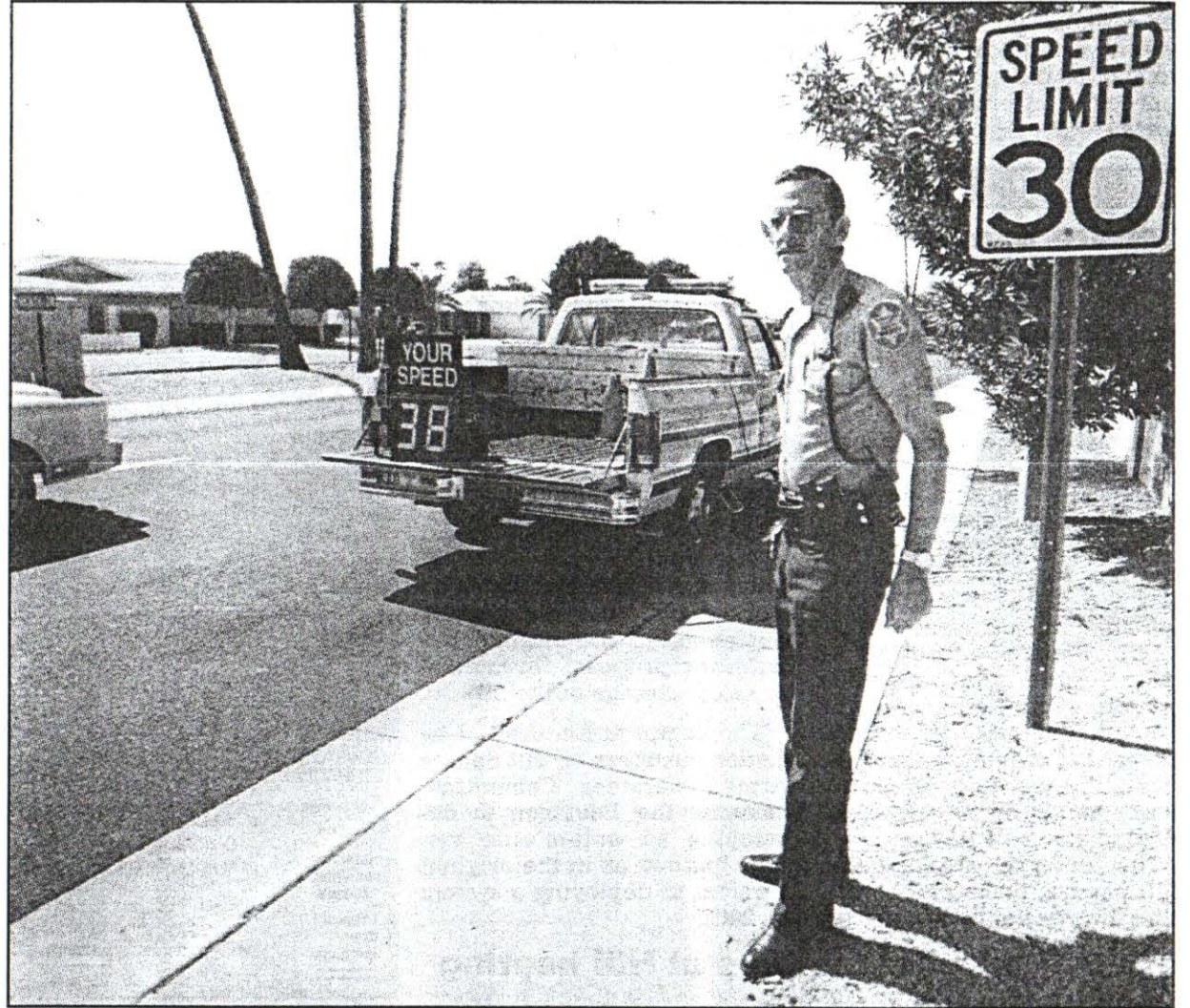
there, they're going to get the message. The Sun City West Posse is looking at doing the same thing."

Once posse members get an idea of how fast drivers are traveling in a certain area, they will call on deputies who will then monitor traffic where problems with speeding are cropping up, Cody said. This may include issuing tickets.

While Sun City is attempting to put the brakes on speeding, and Sun City West is contemplating a radar system, such a program isn't in the works for Youngtown. Police Chief Art Baker said it's a matter of money.

County officials also are hoping that by making drivers aware of their speed, the number of accidents and the severity of those accidents will drop.

"Sun City has the highest accident rate in the county because of the age of the people," Babb said. "People don't see as well, hear as well or respond as quickly. If we can keep the speed down, the accidents won't be as serious."



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Sun City Posse Cmdr. Dave Cody hopes that this speed radar will slow drivers on local streets. The posse plans to set the radar along major streets in Sun City.

Bell Road:

By Barbara Deters
and Jennifer Barrett
Staff writers

You can get just about anything you want on West Bell Road — except a restaurant table without a wait.

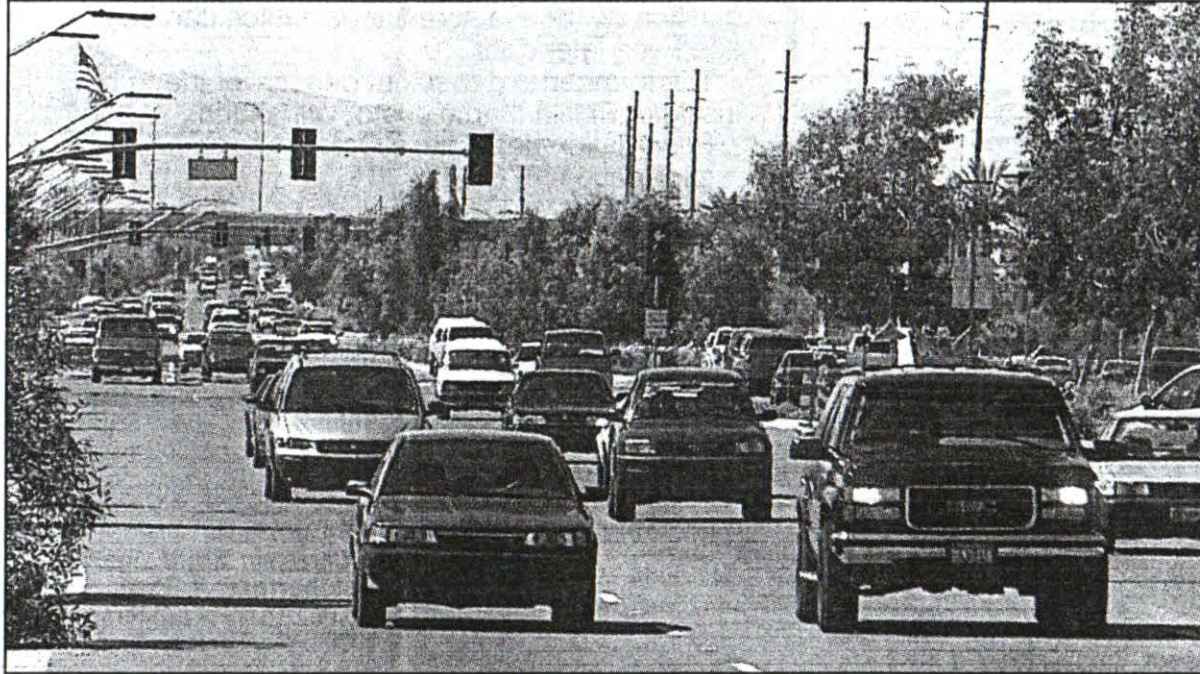
The retail and restaurant explosion between 51st avenue and Loop 101 has given consumers a lot of choices in just a few miles.

But analysts say West Bell Road has finally hit its retail saturation point.

Not only is every retail need filled, but so is nearly every piece of land. On top of that, the national retail industry has softened in the past six to nine months. So has interest from the few national corporations who have not yet dropped their chain stores along the corridor.

Phoenix retail developer Opus Southwest, which helped fill much of the retail space along the strip, had a 15-acre parcel on the northeastern corner of Bell Road and the Outer Loop. But the group's not marketing it to retailers anymore, Opus President Tom Roberts said: "We could not get the retail center leased."

He's not worried though. The little space that's left is being snapped up by auto dealerships, hotels, and home and office developments. Roberts had offers



Glendale traffic officials say the number of cars traveling daily on Bell Road near Arrowhead Towne Center has increased from about 19,000 in 1988 to 32,000 in 1995.

Nancy Engebretson / Staff photographer

from five hoteliers for Opus' 15 acres, but instead is cutting a deal with a single car dealer.

Meanwhile, at least four hotel chains have been vying for a spot on 95 acres along 83rd Avenue south of Bell. Expect 1,000 hotel rooms to be built along the corridor over the next few years, said Bruce

Milton, manager of the commercial-investment division of Prudential Mull-Smith Realtors.

Hotel companies aren't the only ones looking at Prudential's Bell Road properties. The Realtors recently signed a deal with Budget-Car Sales for an auto dealership north of Bell between 67th and 75th avenues. And Milton said he's

got medical professionals and automotive companies inquiring about remaining space between 59th and 73rd avenues.

"The retail is getting ready to peak," he said, adding that nonetheless the company still gets more inquiries for small and large office space than it can supply.

See **CORRIDOR**, Page 6

Many are lured to Bell Road
Page A1

In the next month, Community will spotlight Bell Road by maps and highlight different sections of the corridor.

A magnet for retailers

These are many large tenants on Bell Road between 51st and 83 avenues:

Restaurants	58
Personal services	44
Gifts/specialty	41
Clothing	39
Furnishings	38
Appliances	27
Automotive	24
Food	20
Health care	20
Fast food	18
Recreational	16
Shoes	13
Food service	11
Drugs/liquor	4
Building materials	3

Source: Glendale economic-development office

Stores,
restaurants
saturate
booming
commercial
corridor

WEST VALLEY LIVING

OVER

You might even see a sports-oriented family fun park or entertainment center at the other end near the Outer Loop. The Bell Road corridor already boasts four arcades, a bowling alley and three movie theaters — including a 14-screen complex AMC recently unveiled at Arrowhead Towne Center — and the Peoria Sports Complex, just south of Bell.

Although there were already plenty of people moving into the surrounding Sun Cities, Surprise, Glendale and Peoria areas, Bell's numerous amenities are helping draw even more. So many, in fact, that analysts expect the Arrowhead area will be the fastest-growing section of the Valley over the next 10 years.

Just south of Bell near the 71st avenue alignment, Metropolitan Land Co. owns 100 acres of residential land. But that's not enough to satisfy all the Valley home builders clamoring to build there, said Bill Milne, Metropolitan's president.

There are already about a dozen major new housing developments within a 5-mile radius of the Bell Road corridor — with homes ranging in price from about \$60,000 to more than \$200,000. But that's a bargain compared with the newer homes in the Arrowhead Ranch development by the mall, which now boasts homes for \$500,000.

Bell Road's image has "clearly improved" because of upscale housing and the 1993 construction of Arrowhead Towne Center, real-estate expert Elliott Pollack said.

"Bell Road used to be kind of dumpy," he said. "(But) it's a very strong area at this point."

Analysts say Bell Road has the ideal combination of retail, residential and commercial occupants. But they warn that with a duplication of services and a softened national retail market, there will be casualties among the national chain stores.

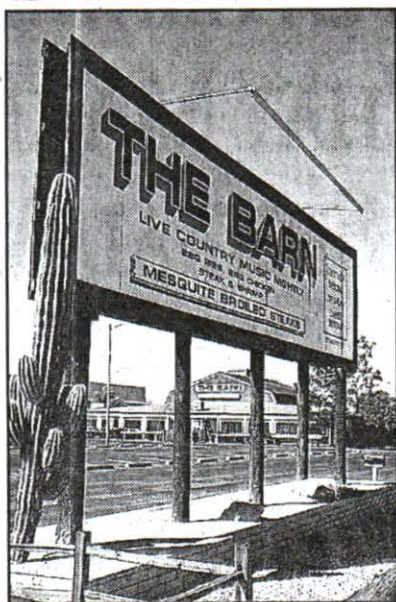
"Everybody in the retail business tends to believe they do it better than the other guy," said Doug Baker, an associate at Eisenberg Co., a commercial developer. "It's true someone's going to go away. It's just a matter of time."

That time could come within a few years, retail and real-estate experts warn.

Besides Arrowhead Towne Center, Bell Road is awash in large shopping centers with huge anchor stores such as Target, Sports Authority, Linens N' Things, and Home Depot.

Between 51st Avenue and the Outer Loop, there are more than 100 restaurants, more than 50 clothing and shoe shops, and about 40 home-furnishing stores.

Bob Kamrath, a Phoenix retail real-estate expert, said companies are conscious of what's



Nancy Engebretson / Staff photographer

The Barn has been serving steaks on Bell Road since 1973, making it one of the first restaurants in the area.

working and what's not working in their stores. But even a store that has gangbuster sales on West Bell Road could be forced to close if the parent company goes belly-up at the national level or merges with a competitor.

Such mergers already are starting to happen. When TJ Maxx bought Marshall's recently, the company closed its Marshall's site just west of Arrowhead mall.

Nonetheless, most retailers seem confident that they won't be the ones leaving, convinced they've found the secret to success.

Oshman's Sporting Goods' new 60,000-square-foot interactive store on Bell allows customers to check out any equipment they want on the store's basketball court, in-line skating track, batting cage, putting green and racquetball court.

"We're like the Nordstrom's of the sporting-goods stores," said Alvin Lubetkin, Oshman's head of investor relations.

He's convinced that Oshman's is here to stay, even though the company has suffered losses nationally. He said the new interactive concept is turning the company around.

Finding a niche, even among the national chains, seems to be the key to survival. Even those who have strong direct competition have to find something to draw customers in. Many times, that's service.

"Once they realize that prices are similar among all major retailers, then they'll look for other things such as service," said Paul Rakov, spokesman for Circuit City. "That's how we distinguish ourselves."

Upgrading the quality of the merchandise was key to Levitz's ability to remain competitive, said Tom Haldeman, manager of the

Levitz store on West Bell Road.

It got a head start on the more upscale buyers shopping in the area. Competitor Ethan Allen finally opened late last month after land negotiations dragged on more than a year and a half, said Don Quinn, the Valley's Ethan Allen dealer.

"If we could have opened a year and a half ago, we would have," he said. "I'm sure we've missed business by not being out there sooner."

With an ever-increasing number of nearby residents and consumers, the furniture store should make up for lost business pretty quickly. Bell Road is selling itself so well, in fact, that Glendale and Peoria economic-development officials already have turned their attention elsewhere.

"We're so confident that we can be trying to identify new corridors," said David Kincaid, a consultant for the Peoria Economic Development Corp. "Peoria's growing north. We need to develop another retail corridor like Bell."

Chuck Berkenkamp, Glendale's business development manager, has turned his focus to the south.

City officials are looking at further development in the downtown area and along Glendale avenue.

Even the possibility of consolidations and bankruptcies on the retail front don't squelch analysts' and real-estate experts' enthusiasm for Bell Road.

"If I owned property on Bell Road that had buildings on them, I'd be sleeping very well," said Judi Butterworth, a retail specialist with De Rito Partners Inc., which was one of the first companies to market land on West Bell.

"I think there's going to be a continuous appetite for new concepts to be created and old concepts to go out," Butterworth said. "Generally, there is somebody waiting in the wings to take over if you fail."

The bottom line is that the retail industry is never going to be what it used to be, she added.

"It used to be if somebody signed a lease for 20 years, you could pretty much count on that in Year 16, they'd still be there," she said. "But it's really different today. Today, it's a dynamic market with new ideas, new concepts."

State questions seniors' driving skills

Staff and wire reports

PHOENIX — Requests to revoke the licenses of older adults are on the rise, a state Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Division official says.

More and more, those requests are being made by the children of older drivers who don't think their parents should be driving, said Michelle Kolbe, head of the medical review program of the MVD.

"We get calls every day," Kolbe said.

Maricopa County sheriff's deputies also let Kolbe know if, after writing a traffic ticket or responding to an accident, they question an older person's driving skills.

"We do that quite a bit," said Sgt.

'We have to think about the other 100,000 people in this area who might be injured because this person cannot drive.'

**Sgt. Bob Weeden
Sheriff's office**



Bob Weeden, who works out of the sheriff's substation in Surprise.

Sheriff's deputies file a form notifying the state of a possibly impaired driver. Children seeking a revocation

of a parent's driver's license also are asked to put their concerns in writing.

A person's license will be immediately suspended if a driver's physician writes the MVD. A letter from a family member requires a driver to submit to a medical evaluation within 30 days or the license will be suspended.

Arizona drivers under 60 have their licenses renewed every 12 years, including a required vision test. Drivers 60 and older must renew every five years.

The MVD revokes 1,000 licenses annually, with a quarter of those appealed. However, most of the revocations are upheld, officials say.

Indications that an older driver should lose his or her license include becoming lost while driving, inattention and lack of awareness of

See Seniors resist, A5

—From A1

his or her surroundings, Weeden said.

Although revocation is traumatic for drivers, it's a responsibility a deputy cannot shirk, he said.

Weeden said some older drivers continue to drive, despite a revocation or license restrictions prohibiting them from driving at night or more than five miles away from home.

"Freedom is what they're giving up. A lot of people figure hey, I'm going to drive anyway," Weeden said, citing a Youngtown woman involved in eight accidents.

"Her license has been revoked for a while but she still has a car. We can't take her car away from her. She just hops in her car and drives," he said.

The American Association of Retired Persons has fought efforts to pass federal laws requiring older drivers to submit to special testing, saying it is unfair and arbitrary.

Jerry Frazin of Sun City West, an assistant state coordinator for AARP's 55-Alive

defensive driving course for seniors, said relinquishing a driver's license because of physical or other impairments is part of the course curriculum.

The decision is difficult to make, he said, because a driver's license is "the last island of independence."

Frazin said he can see how children would worry about their parents and he knows there are people in their 70s and 80s who shouldn't be driving.

However, he said, "there are people of all ages driving around who don't pay attention to their driving."

AARP's defensive-driving courses are booked a month in advance. Most people sign up to qualify for an auto-insurance discount, Frazin said.

Even if saving money is the motive, class participants learn something, he said.

"I don't care if they're getting a million dollars or getting a penny (discount), we can touch them and we can save a life," he said.

Truck routing gets mixed reviews

Permanent solution sought to dust, noise

By JACQUE PAPPAS
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Residents will have to endure a summer of truck noise and dust while a solution is developed behind the scenes to alleviate complaints about sand and gravel operations.

The next public meeting to discuss alternate routes for the trucks that travel to and from the Agua Fria River bed won't be until September.

Meanwhile, several sand and gravel companies are using temporary routes in hopes of spreading out the noise of constant truck traffic.

Although residents complained that the temporary routes were not effective when companies started using them on a voluntary basis May 21, some said the situation has improved in many areas.

D.C. Black, deputy engineer and highway director for Maricopa County, said committee members last week said that some sand and gravel operations

are doing their best to cooperate.

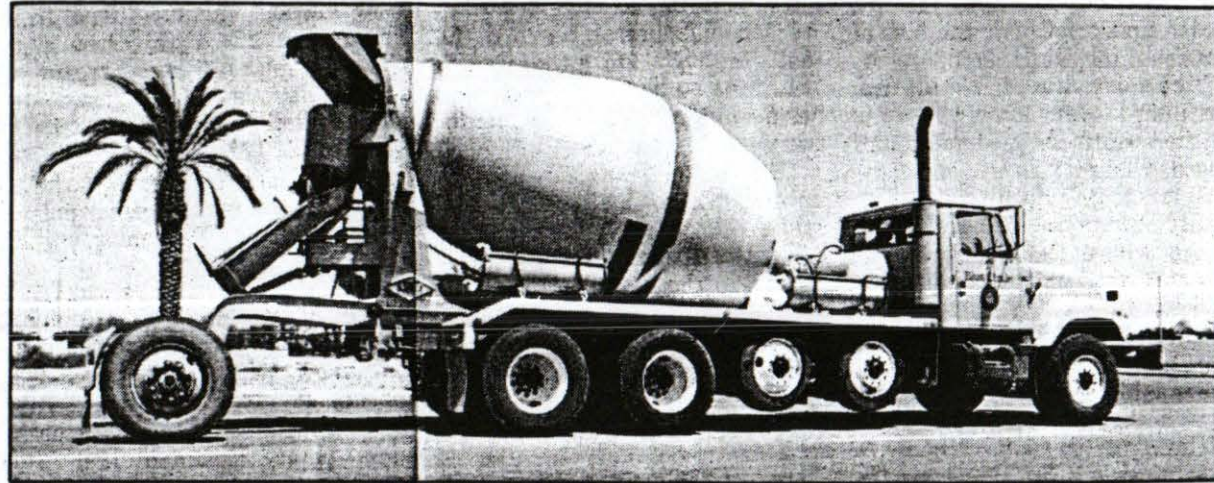
So far, United Metro Materials Division and BCW Cement Co. (formerly Blue Circle West) have made the only "true attempts" to stay on the fixed routes, Black said.

"The committee generally felt that the attempt by Blue Circle and United Metro was a success story. It started off poorly, but once we got past Memorial Day break, it really improved," Black said. "Of course, there are some who get more traffic than others, but things have generally evened out."

The truck traffic committee agreed in May to route traffic out of the riverbed east on Beardsley Road and then south on 91st Avenue to Union Hills Road. Incoming trucks will travel west on Union Hills and then go north using 99th or 107th avenues. The trucks are traveling to and from the Agua Fria River bottom north of Sun City.

"The trucks participating in the plan represent about 65 percent of the total traffic we are trying to deal with," Black said. "But we intend to maintain that until a near-term solution is developed."

David Chavez of United Metro



Daily News-Sun photo by Stephen Cherek

ALTERNATE ROUTE — A cement mixer travels on 107th Avenue north of Beardsley Road Tuesday afternoon. Sand and gravel industry officials have agreed to encourage travel on designated routes until a long-term solution is devised to alleviate truck traffic and noise.

has been working with the other sand and gravel operators to try to enforce the temporary plan.

Chavez said several other operators agreed late last week to try to comply with the temporary routes.

"I think it's their desire to want to cooperate and they saw that it was working with BCW and United Metro," he said. "We're going to encourage trucks leaving our (property) to please use these alternate routes by posting a map. I'm

sure we'll get some participation."

While Chavez said the industry wants to support a plan that appeases local residents, he said control is not absolute over independent truckers and others who do not want to comply.

But Maricopa County Supervisor Carole Carpenter said, "they (the sand and gravel operators) can put significant pressure on independent truckers who want to do business with them."

"This certainly is not a long-term solution to the problems, but it's a start," she said.

This summer, representatives from the sand and gravel industry, UDC Homes, Westbrook Village, the city of Peoria and the county will be discussing the possibility of rerouting traffic on Deer Valley Road using the proposed 83rd Avenue Parkway.

The route would involve opening Deer Valley from the riverbed east to 91st Avenue,

crossing southeast to Beardsley and then to the proposed 83rd Avenue Parkway.

County officials hope to have an answer on the possibility of such an alignment in September.

Peoria Mayor Ron Travers said the long-term proposal faces several roadblocks, including the estimated \$1.5-million price tag.

"Peoria's capital plan is totally committed this year and our budget constraints would not let us work anything out this year," Travers said.

Some residents who say even the temporary plan has not provided relief from the noise and dust say they will wait for a long-term solution if that's what it takes.

Doris Cassedy, who lives off the corner of 107th Avenue and Beardsley Road, said she is wary that the investigation of the Deer Valley Road alternative is just a stalling tactic.

"I get the noise now no matter what, because my home is in this pocket. But I understand if this is the best they could come up with at this time," Cassedy said.

June '90

Gravel-truck noise continues to raise neighborhood uproar

By Ryan Konig
Staff writer

SUN CITY — Trucks sometimes make unwelcome neighbors no matter whose neighborhood they're in.

Dozens of elected officials, trucking industry representatives and Sun City and Peoria residents have spent the past 10 months trying to hush the noise from the area's sand and gravel trucking industry.

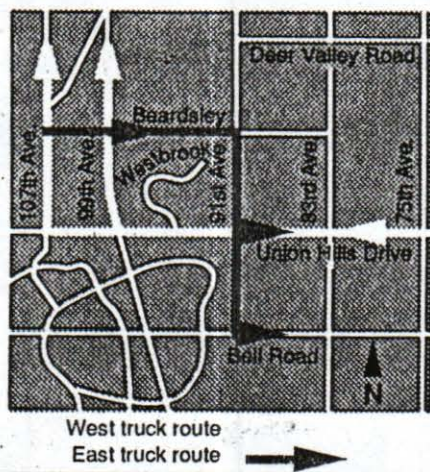
The group recently completed a month-long experiment in which sand and gravel truck routes were spread out to dilute a former concentration in the Beardsley Road area of Sun City and Westbrook Village in Peoria.

Called the Sand and Gravel Truck Traffic Working Committee, the group reviewed the experiment's success at its meeting Friday at the Sundial Recreation Center, 103rd Avenue and Boswell Boulevard, Sun City.

Although some residents praised the rerouting plan, which reduced sand and gravel truck noise in their areas, previously unaffected residents were upset that the rerouting involved them.

Maricopa County Supervisor Carole Carpenter said the noise issue is something of a paradox.

Routes



Staff artist

"Our problem is that every time we try a solution, new groups of people are affected," she said.

Carpenter formed the committee after residents of Sun City and Peoria asked the county to reduce sand and gravel truck traffic in their areas.

See TRUCKS, Page 3

TRUCKS

From Page 1

Since then, residents from Glendale and Surprise complained that the rerouting has increased the noise in their areas.

The committee decided to extend the plan through the summer.

Committee member Dorwin Black, deputy county engineer, said the designated route plan could work if the area's six sand and gravel companies participate.

David Chavez, who proposed the designated route plan, said he would ask independent truckers to participate in the rerouting project.

Chavez is a committee member representing United Metro and BCW Cement, companies with sand and gravel operations that are participating in the plan.

The two companies generate about 60 percent of the sand and gravel industry's traffic near Sun City and Peoria's common border in the Northwest Valley.

The designated route stipulates that the trucks, when traveling east, should take Beardsley Road, turn south on 91st Avenue and then continue east on Union Hills Drive or Bell Road.

And when traveling west, the trucks are to take Union Hills Drive to 99th or 107th avenues and then head north.

The idea was to route sand and gravel truck traffic such that some residents would be affected during deliveries and others during pickups. Formerly, the trucks had passed some homes when traveling to drop-off sites and again when returning from the delivery.

Rerouting the truck traffic away from residential sections would place a financial hardship on the sand and gravel companies, said company representatives, adding that even a one-mile detour can add \$6 to the cost of hauling each load.

The project's success will be evaluated again at the committee's September meeting.

If the plan does not work, and future committee efforts fail to quiet the noise, the issue eventually could advance to the state legislature, Carpenter said.

Still kicking up dust 6-90

Truck, sand problems improve, no permanent solution in sight

Although the traffic and noise produced from sand and gravel trucks has decreased, there is still no permanent relief in sight for area residents during the next few months.

Since alternate routes for the trucks were developed in May, many residents agree that the problem has "gotten better."

However, not all sand and gravel companies are using the suggested alternate routes.

United Metro Materials Division and Blue Circle West Cement Co. were the only two operators to agree to the temporary routes proposed in May.

David Chavez of United Metro, at a recent truck traffic committee meeting held June 22, said, "United Metro and BCW will talk to representatives from other trucking firms to see if they, too, will use the alternate routes."

The May proposal involved rerouting trucks down a mile section of Beardsley Road, east, then south on 91st Avenue to Union Hills Road. The trucks then come back on Union Hills, west, then go north, traveling 99th or 107th avenues.

The alternate routes seem to be working for some residents who complained about the truck traffic and noise in the past.

However, Maricopa County Supervisor Carole Carpenter says, "Every time they (the sand and gravel companies) try to reroute, it creates another problem (for other residents)."

Residents will have to wait until the next public meeting, in September, for a solution to the truck noise.

El Mirage
Glendale
Peoria
Phoenix
Sun City
Sun City West
Surprise
Youngtown
Wickenburg

Northwest COMMUNITY

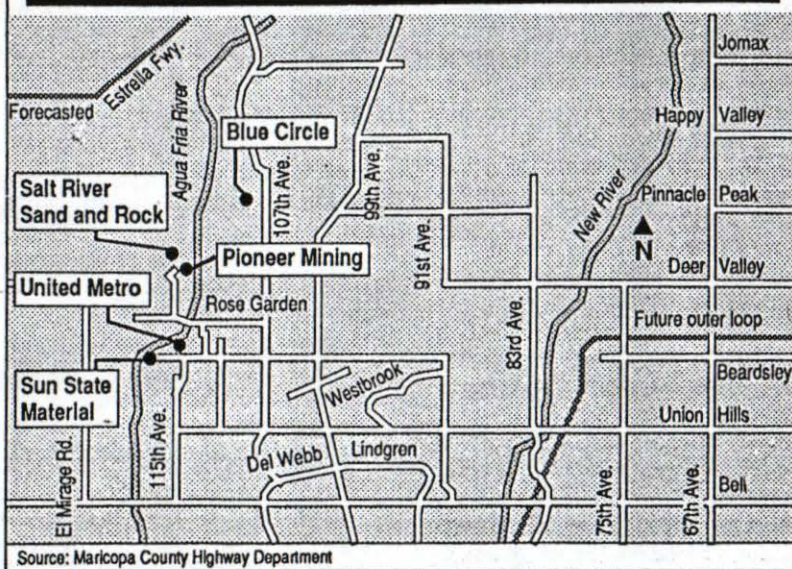
THE
PHOENIX
GAZETTE

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Wednesday, May 23, 1990

1W

Northwest sand and gravel operations



Source: Maricopa County Highway Department

Staff artist

Trucks test anti-noise routes

By **Connie Cone Sexton**
Staff writer

At least two sand and gravel operators have agreed to follow a designated route in an effort to appease Northwest Valley residents angered over noise from their trucks.

A representative for Blue Circle and United Metro made the suggestion Friday to a county-appointed committee working to mitigate truck noise and traffic on area streets.

Residents from Sun City and Westbrook Village in Peoria attended Friday's meeting, saying they were tired of a steady flow of

trucks traveling their streets heading to or from the six area sand and gravel operations.

Many of the complaints are from those living near Beardsley Road and Union Hills Drive between 91st and 107th avenues.

David Chavez, a sand and gravel association representative, offered them a solution. He suggested the following route for the two sand and gravel companies:

■ For outbound travel, trucks would head east on Beardsley Road, south on 91st Avenue and then west on Union Hills Drive or Bell Road.

■ For inbound travel, trucks

would take Union Hills Drive to 99th or 107th avenues and would head north.

Chavez said this plan puts morning traffic on Beardsley Road and afternoon traffic on Union Hills Drive and could provide some relief to residents living along these corridors.

Chavez, a safety and risk management director for Tanner Companies which owns United Metro, said sand and gravel operators sympathize with area residents.

"We are trying to work with them. We want to arrive at a reasonable solution," he said.

He plans to contact the other

companies to see if they will agree to use the route when heading east.

Committee members, who have been stalemated for several months trying to find a solution, agreed to try his plan for a month.

They will meet June 22 to evaluate the results.

But Peoria Mayor Ron Travers, a committee member, was not satisfied with the plan.

"I don't think it is a solution. I think it will make more people angry. I think it just spreads out the problem and puts the noise on more streets," he said.

See TRUCKS, Page 4

OVER

TRUCKS

From Page 1

However, Carole Carpenter, the area's representative on the county Board of Supervisors, supported the plan.

"This is the best solution I've heard so far even though this spreads it (the problem) out more."

Some committee members argued that the routes are not enforceable.

"That would be very difficult to police. I don't think it would work too well," one committee member said. He suggested installing permanent signs to designate the route.

Carpenter suggested that the committee wait until the members hear how well the route was received before deciding to post signs.

Even with the designated route, Chavez wasn't sure how much relief could be granted because independent drivers who buy materials from the area sand and gravel operations might decide not to follow the route.

The committee, which has been meeting since September, has reviewed several options.

A proposed short-term solution was to rotate the streets trucks would use. Beardsley Road, for

example, could be used only one week out of three, giving those residents along the area a two-week noise break.

A proposed long-term solution would be to construct an extension of Deer Valley Road, between 91st and 107th avenues, allowing truck traffic to follow that route.

But Travers said Peoria has no plans to build such a road.

"We won't be building a road just so 50 people won't have to hear any truck noise," he said.

Dot Irving, a Sun City resident and committee member, pushed for east-west truck travel on Bell Road and suggested they use 115th Avenue, just west of Sun City, to get from the sand and gravel operations to Bell Road.

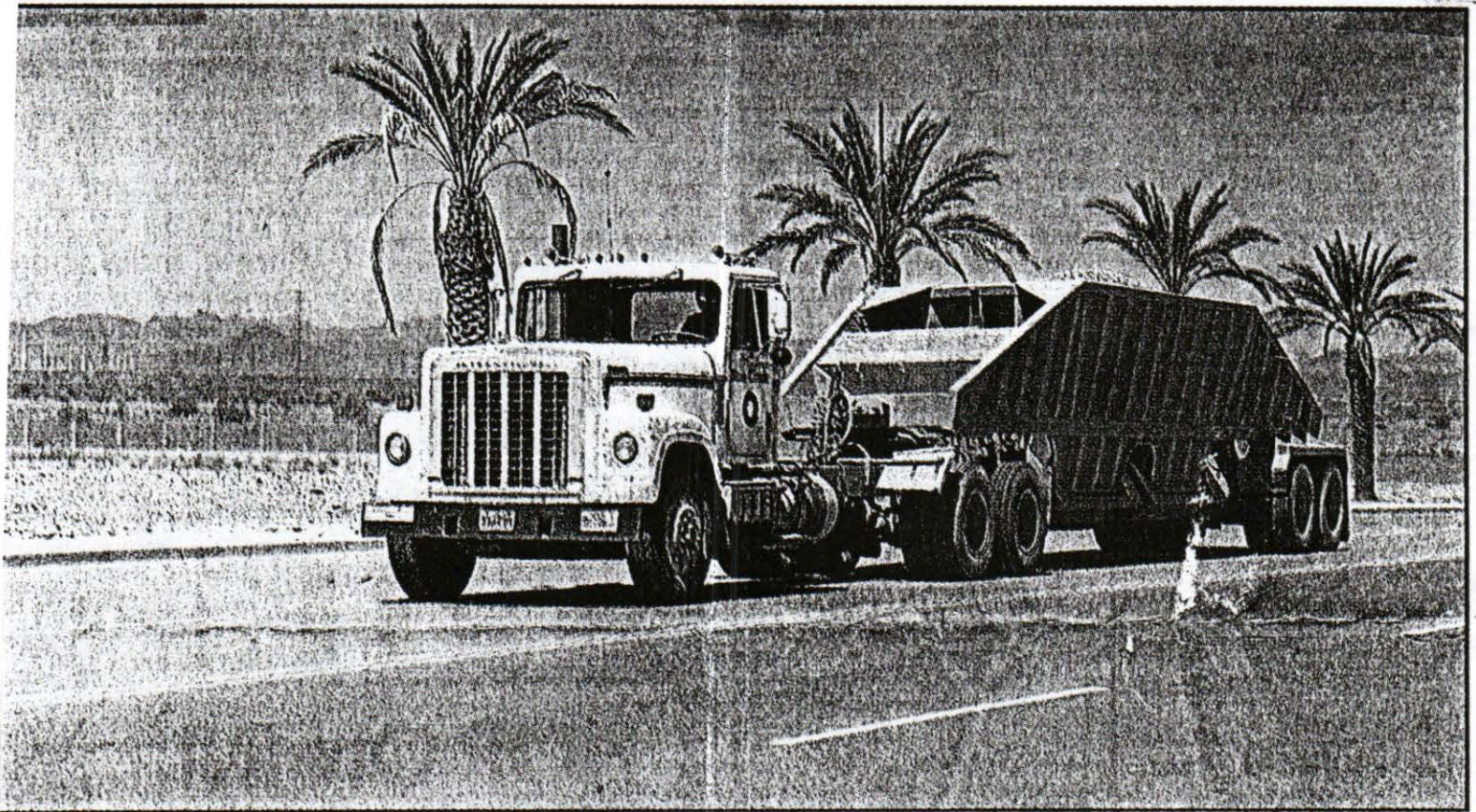
Other residents agreed, saying Bell is a more heavily traveled road and has fewer residents living adjacent to it.

But Carpenter said residents along Bell also monitor truck travel.

"I get calls all the time about trucks on Bell. I don't want anyone to think you won't affect anyone on Bell," by making that the designated route, she said.

MAY 1990

ARIZ REP.



Pam Schwartz / Staff photographer

Northwest Valley residents are upset about noise from gravel trucks, such as this one going south on 107th Avenue.

62 per hour

Trucks, trucks, trucks raise residents' ire

By Connie Cone Sexton
Staff writer

Ron Pewterbaugh wants to live on a road less traveled.

The Peoria resident, whose home on Beardsley Road is within a four-mile radius of five sand and gravel operations, is tired of seeing a steady stream of heavy trucks pass by.

"The noise is terrible," Pewterbaugh said. "One hour, I counted 62 trucks go by. They start up early in the morning. The other day, one woke me at

4:38 a.m."

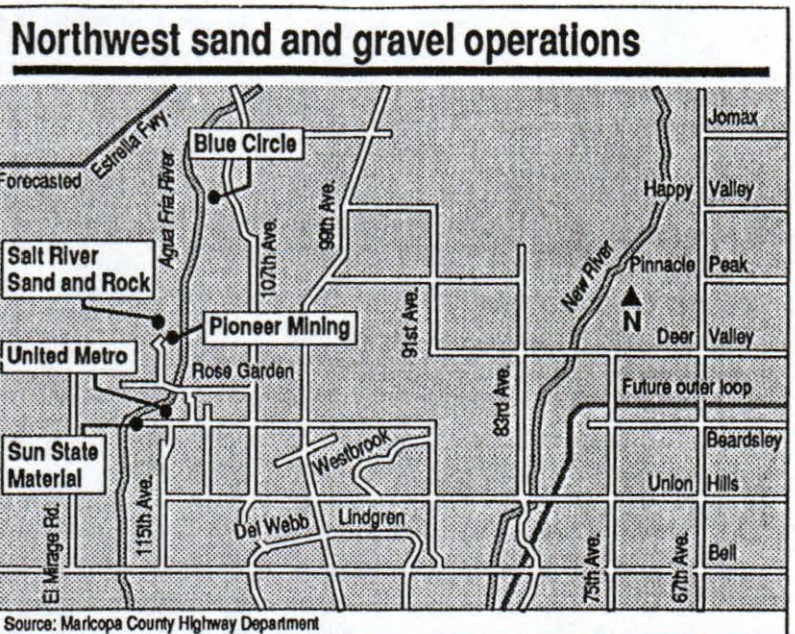
In October, when Pewterbaugh moved into his house in Westbrook Village, Beardsley Road was unfinished.

"I knew it was going to be a road some day but I didn't have any idea it would be this bad," he said. "There is just a continuous line of trucks. I've gone out and videotaped them. I just get so mad. It's impossible to sit out in the back yard during the day."

Pewterbaugh thinks there are better roads for the trucks to take as they travel to and from the gravel pits.

Maricopa County officials are listening — to Pewterbaugh's plight and to the rumblings of the trucks.

See TRUCK, Page 3



Source: Maricopa County Highway Department

Staff artist

TRUCK

From Page 1

A committee of Peoria and Sun City residents, government officials and sand and gravel operators are working to find ways to mitigate truck noise on Northwest Valley streets. They are expected to recommend in May alternatives for truck travel.

The committee — headed by county Supervisor Carole Carpenter and Peoria Mayor Ron Travers — met last week to discuss a consultant's report on the options.

Scott Cantine of Howard Needles Tammen & Bergendoff outlined various possibilities for handling problems in the immediate, near (two to three years) and long term (three years or more). Cantine's firm is a Phoenix architectural company that does design, planning and consulting.

There is no easy solution, Cantine told committee members and about 150 people who came to the meeting.

Taking each possible route, Cantine examined what kinds of road improvements would be necessary to handle the trucks, what the cost would be, what effect the route would have on the community and the sand and gravel businesses, and whether the alternate route would reduce noise.

He showed the committee a map marking the location of the five area sand and gravel operations: Blue Circle, Salt River Sand and Rock, United Metro, Pioneer Mining and Sun State Mineral.

Those working to solve the problem should realize the trucking operations can't just disappear, he said.

His words were lost on Sun City resident Eleanor Macory, who said to the sand and gravel operators: "We don't want you. We don't need you. We don't have to have it."

Immediate solutions that could be taken include rotating the routes that trucks could take. One month the designated route for north-south travel could be 115th Avenue. Another month it could be one of the other roads nearby.

The same method would be used for east-west travel, alternating between Beardsley Road, Union Hills Drive and Bell Road.

Costs for other alternatives would be high, Cantine said.

A suggestion to extend 115th Avenue to Pinnacle Peak so it can be used exclusively would require 2.7 miles of construction at a cost of about \$810,000.

Developing a four-mile road through the Agua Fria riverbed would cost about \$1.2 million.

For the long term, extending 115th to Jomax Road would cost \$1.4 million.

Cantine said that of the north-south routes, the Agua Fria comes out on top.

"Noise will be contained within the flood plain, away from development," he said.

East-west routes that scored high are undeveloped routes such as Jomax and Happy Valley roads or the use of undeveloped routes such as the alignments of Pinnacle Peak Road, Deer Valley Road and Rose Garden Lane.

Cantine said the costs of construction would have to be shared by the county and Peoria.

But some of the residents at the meeting said it should be the responsibility of the sand and gravel operations to share some of the costs.

Representatives from the gravel businesses said they want to comply with what the committee will recommend but their costs for travel need to be considered. Detouring even one mile can add \$6 to the cost of hauling each load, they said.

Aside from the noise, many residents complained that the trucks speed.

Last month, county police officers issued 60 citations to 15 trucks near 91st Avenue and Bell Road. Peoria police estimate that of every 25 speeding tickets issued, three go to trucks.

The average speed of the trucks monitored was about 12 mph over the limit.

Cantine said speed enforcement also would help in noise reduction.

The next meeting of the committee is scheduled for 10 a.m. April 27 in the Westbrook Village Recreation Center, 19251 N. Westbrook Parkway.

County hears concerns over Bell noise 6/87

Residents submit plan to fill holes in buffer wall

By JACQUE PAPPAS
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Area residents hoping to reduce noise from Bell Road traffic may get cooperation from the county within the year.

Supervisor Carole Carpenter met with about 25 residents from four local condominium groups Tuesday and discussed proposals that would provide an additional buffer to reduce noise in the area.

"My concern, and I think the concern shared with residents along Bell Road, is to mitigate the noise to the extent that the county is able to. We need to do this prior to the overall design and work on Bell," Carpenter said. "I have been told by consultants that short of putting up big sound barriers, the simple thing that would most reduce the noise is filling in the open spaces of the wall along Bell Road."

In April, residents living on the North side of Bell Road from 105th Avenue to Del Webb Boulevard asked Carpenter and the county staff to look into ways to reduce noise in the area.

And Tuesday, area residents at the meeting approved a proposal for the county to fill about 100 gaps in the standard six-foot brick wall parallel to Bell Road.

Carpenter said the four condominium areas involved — Del Pinion, Pinion Plaza, 107 Granada and Granada Gardens — are in a unique situation because they are only 35 feet away from the brick wall.

Each of the condominiums, which collectively have 57 units, need to give the county written approval on the proposal before any further action can be taken.

"This is a relatively unique situation. We want to do something as quickly as we can but we must enter an inter-

Maricopa County Supervisor Carole Carpenter said the four condominium areas involved — Del Pinion, Pinion Plaza, 107 Granada and Granada Gardens — are in a unique situation because they are only 35 feet away from the brick wall.

governmental agreement to allow the county to take action and fill the holes," said Carpenter, D-Dist. 4. "We can't touch the walls without approval. If the county attorney's office gives the legal go-ahead, then the county will absorb the cost. Down the road we can address bigger issues. In the future we hope developers do not put homes so close to major roadways."

Carpenter said any construction in the area done by the county would require approval from the entire board of supervisors.

Sun Citian Charles Cavallo, who organized meetings with county staff and area residents, said he will contact the condominiums' board of directors to get approval to fill the gaps in the wall.

"We want to try this wall solution and we are happy the county has done so much work investigating this for us. It may not be the final solution, but we must try," said Cavallo, 17006 Pinion Lane. "Noise is not the only problem. Our major problem is fumes that exist from cars and trucks. We try to avoid sitting out on the patio because it's so bad. We thought maybe plants by the wall would help."

But Wayne Collins, deputy county engineer, said shrubbery would have a minimal affect on sound or fumes created by traffic on Bell Road.

"I can't imagine that we can do much about the fumes problem," Collins said. "Fumes are mixed with the air on a broad range and height. The wind often determines the direction they travel."

Collins said five other condominium units on the south side of Bell Road are in the same situation because they were built so close to the brick wall.

He said the majority of private homes on the south side are not as adversely affected because soil and rocks in their backyards help absorb the noise. Collins said pavement induces noise.

He said 105th Avenue to Del Webb Boulevard is one of the first of 15 construction areas on the Bell Road project scheduled to begin by 1990.

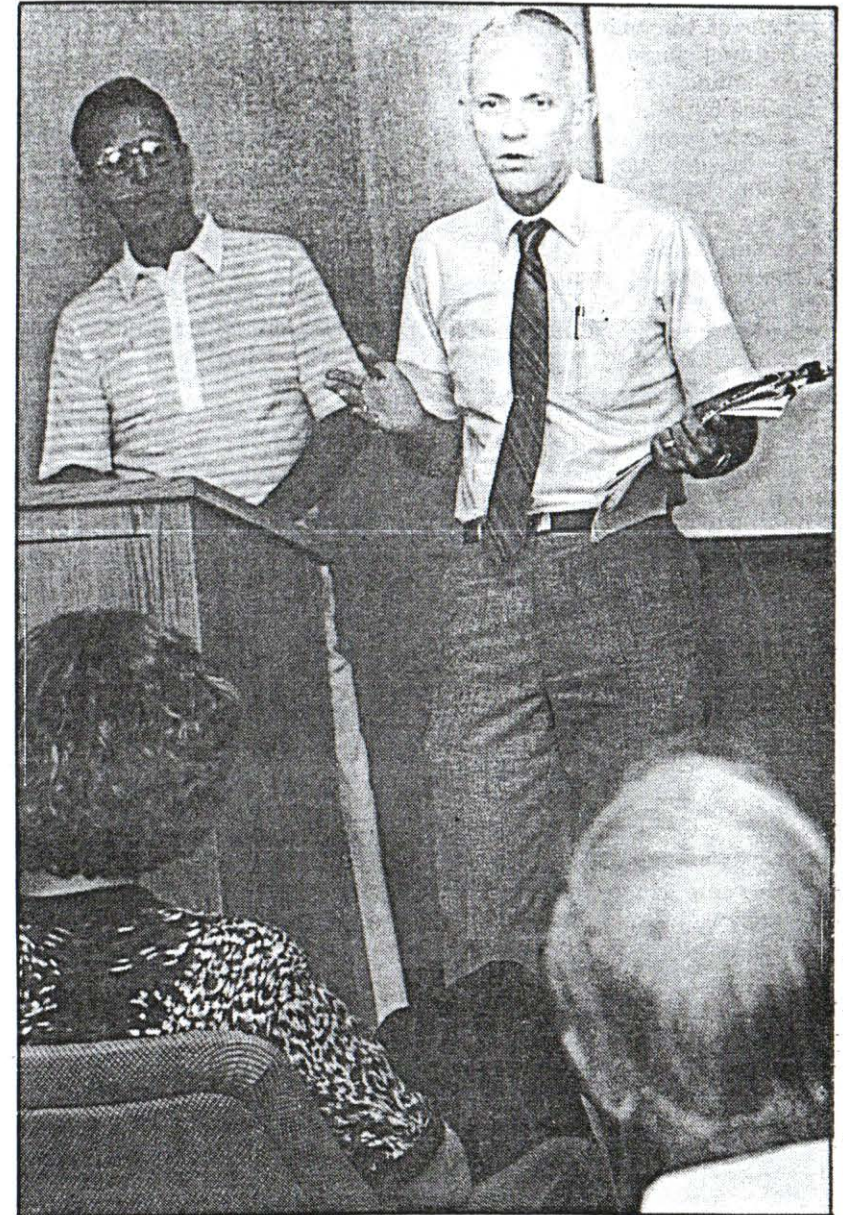
And because Bell Road construction is all one project, the section in question must be compatible with the rest of the area, Collins said.

"I'd be nervous about putting too many plants out there before you know what to do at Bell Road. Besides, bushes would cost much more than filling in the wall," Collins said. "The side effects of noise will have to be looked at anyway when we build along Bell Road. Now we just need to get approval by the owners and go through the county attorney for legal authority."

Engineers representing the company working with the county on the Bell Road construction plan said filling gaps in the wall would cost about \$7,000.

Howard Pilkington, supervising civil engineer for Parsons, Brinckerhoff, Quade and Douglas, said the gaps were probably built in the wall for decorative purposes or because no one anticipated such increased use of Bell Road.

"There are a variety of ways to close the holes in the wall and still incorporate it with the entire design of the road," Pilkington said. "Appearance is important, but the main thing is to close the holes because even a few openings can let noise in."



News-Sun photo by Mollie J. Hoppes
TRAFFIC CONCERNS— Deputy County Engineer Wayne Collins speaks to Sun City condominium owners affected by noise from traffic traveling along Bell Road. Charles Cavallo, left, organized the Tuesday meeting.