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Arizona Corporation Commission

AZ CORP COMMISSION
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AUG 08 2007

Docket#(s): RR-036391A-07-0351

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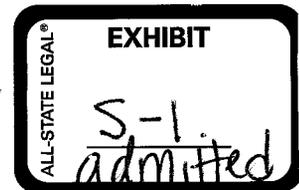
Exhibit #: S1, T1

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Director, Safety Division

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2007 JUL 17 P 2:17

AZ CORP COM Staff Memorandum Commission
DOCKET CONTROL Arizona Corporation Commission

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DOCKET NO. RR-03639A-07-0351

JUL 17 2007

To: THE COMMISSION

From: Safety Division

Date: July 17, 2007

DOCKETED BY *nr*

RE: IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF THE TOWN OF QUEEN CREEK, ARIZONA TO CONSTRUCT A GRADE SEPARATED CROSSING OF THE UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD AT ELLSWORTH LOOP ROAD IN MARICOPA COUNTY, ARIZONA, AAR/DOT No. 942-248-P.

On June 4, 2007, the Town of Queen creek ("Town") filed with the Arizona Corporation Commission ("Commission") an application for approval for the Union Pacific ("Railroad") to construct a new grade separated crossing at Ellsworth Loop Road in Maricopa County, Arizona at AAR/DOT No. 942-248-P.

The Town of Queen Creek has jurisdiction over Ellsworth Loop Road where Union Pacific's railroad tracks and the roadway will meet. This will be a new structure, so there is no accident data for this location. However, a quarter mile to the southeast is the existing Ellsworth Road and Union Pacific at grade crossing. This at grade crossing currently has flashing lights and gates with a concrete crossing surface. Commission Rail Safety section accident/incident records indicate that there have been no incidents at this grade crossing.

The Town of Queen Creek's application requests approval to construct a railroad underpass with six lanes of traffic. This new underpass is expected to remove 90% of the existing and projected traffic from the existing Ellsworth Road at grade crossing. Data from the Town shows that currently Ellsworth Road has an average daily traffic ("ADT") of 20,000 vehicles per day. When the new underpass structure is completed, the Town wishes to leave the existing at grade crossing open.

There are several alternative routes in the area that can be used. Sossaman Road crosses the Railroad tracks 2.5 miles to the northwest of Ellsworth Road. This is a two lane north/south connection. Germann Road ties into Sossaman just north and south of the tracks so this two lane crossing also serves as the jog for an east/west crossing of Germann.

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Executive Director
DAVID RABER
Director, Safety Division

ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION

There are no north-south crossings of the Railroad east of Ellsworth within the Town of Queen Creek. Ocotillo Road crosses the Railroad in an east-west direction $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to the southeast. The Town will be seeking to widen this crossing to five lanes in the future. There is another east-west crossing four miles to the southeast on Riggs Road.

The underpass improvements are part of the Ellsworth Loop/Rittenhouse Road Improvement District. The Improvement District is constructing four miles of six lane major arterial roadways as well as the proposed underpass. Funding for the project comes from bonds that will be repaid by assessments against the properties adjacent to the improvements. These properties include Vestar, Westcore, DeRito Partners, Mid- First Bank, and others as well as the Town of Queen Creek. The Town estimates the cost of the underpass project to be approximately \$54 million dollars. It should be noted, that in negotiations with the Union Pacific Railroad for this project, the Town of Queen Creek turned down the Railroad's offer to help fund the underpass project. The Railroad was willing to contribute to the cost of the underpass if the Town would close the existing at grade crossing at Ellsworth Road. At this point the Town wishes to keep the at grade crossing open, therefore the Railroad is not contributing any funds to this project.

Data provided by the Union Pacific Railroad states that the number of trains per day at this location is between six and eight. There are no passenger trains that operate on this railroad line. The maximum allowable timetable speed for this location is 60 miles per hour.

The Queen Creek School district has a Middle-School located at the southeast corner of Ellsworth Road and Queen Creek Road just a half mile north of the Ellsworth Road at-grade crossing. There is a High-School located on Ocotillo Road 1.75 miles to the southeast. They currently have four elementary schools in the area. One is northeast of the Ellsworth Road at-grade crossing, and three are south of the at-grade crossing. They have started construction on a second Middle-School located at Riggs Road. and Sossaman Road, about three miles southwest of the at-grade crossing. The school bus facility that services all of these schools is located on the northwest corner of the Ellsworth Road and Union Pacific at-grade crossing. The busses have to cross the tracks to pickup 80% of the high school and middle school students and then deliver them back across the tracks to the school locations. The Queen Creek Unified School District Transportation Manager states that about 200 bus trips per day go over the existing at-grade crossing. Since the bus facility is on Ellsworth Road just north of the tracks, this crossing is critical to their local circulation patterns. School starts and ends at different times of the day, so the same buses make numerous trips over the crossing.

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There are no hospitals within the Town limits. There is an Urgent Care facility about four miles northwest of this intersection and another one scheduled to be completed within the year about half a mile south of the crossing. The Town currently has one fire-station which is located on Ellsworth Road about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile south of the at-grade crossing. Ellsworth Road is the only direct route to service the area north and west of the tracks. Even with the new underpass, the current Ellsworth Road at-grade crossing will be the shortest route to residential developments and the middle school on the north side of the tracks.

The Town has cited numerous reasons as to why they would like to keep the existing at-grade crossing open after the new underpass has been constructed. They are quoted here from the Town's Traffic Engineer: "Although the traffic volumes on Ellsworth Rd will be notably less after opening of the Loop Road and underpass, the existing road will continue to serve an important function for traffic circulation in and around the Town Center area. Some of the reasons for the continued importance of Ellsworth Rd after the opening of the Loop Rd are as follows:

1. The existing "downtown" area of Queen Creek, including long-established businesses and the municipal center, is located along Ellsworth south of Rittenhouse. The provision of a contiguous Ellsworth Rd, connected to the remainder of Ellsworth at each end of the Loop Rd, is critical to maintaining accessibility to the heart of the Town.
2. Since the tracks are located on the north side of Rittenhouse, the section of Ellsworth north of the tracks would essentially become a half-mile long cul-de-sac if the existing grade crossing were eliminated. The only point of access to that segment would be to the Ellsworth Loop Rd, requiring all traffic to travel up to the Loop Rd, access a six-lane roadway, travel through the underpass, and then potentially double back along Rittenhouse Rd to reach existing Ellsworth again. The sites that would be significantly impacted in this way include:
 - a. The Queen Creek Unified School District's school bus garage, located on Ellsworth immediately north of the tracks.
 - b. The Queen Creek Middle School, located on Ellsworth just south of Queen Creek Rd.
 - c. The Queenland Manor residential subdivision, which consists of approximately 400 homes.
 - d. An undeveloped parcel located between Ellsworth Rd and the Loop Rd, north of the bus garage. This parcel is anticipated to develop as a commercial use, and will have little or no access to the Loop Rd due to its location. Therefore, access to existing Ellsworth Rd will be critical to the viability of the development of this site.

In fact, due to the importance of a contiguous Ellsworth Rd through the Town Center area, the Town is undertaking an ambitious project to improve the roadway for nearly 1-1/2 miles between the connections with the Loop Rd at

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either end. This work will include extensive parking, pedestrian, landscaping, and aesthetic improvements, as well as some widening and reconstruction work on either side of the Rittenhouse Rd intersection and grade crossing. Although this project is still in the conceptual design stages, the Town does not anticipate any widening or significant modifications to the existing grade crossing, other than pavement restoration and the likely addition of sidewalk where none currently exists. The first phase of improvements intended to support the future use of Ellsworth Rd as a primary circulation corridor within Town Center has already been substantially completed. Working with Union Pacific and the Corporation Commission, a traffic signal was recently constructed at the intersection of Ellsworth Rd and Rittenhouse Rd, adjacent to the existing grade crossing. This signal was specifically designed with a pre-signal upstream from the tracks so that simultaneous pre-emption would be possible, eliminating the need to modify the crossing equipment. Although installed in advance of the underpass completion, the new signal and associated intersection improvements will continue to serve as a hub for circulation in and around Town Center long after the opening of the Loop Rd.”

Having reviewed all applicable data, Staff supports the Town of Queen Creek’s application to construct a grade separated underpass. Staff believes that the upgrade is in the public interest and is reasonable. Staff also believes the current warning devices at the Ellsworth at-grade crossing are satisfactory and are consistent with safety measures employed at similar crossings in the state. As noted in the report, the Town of Queen Creek finds the crossing necessary for local travel convenience, there is no prior accident history at the existing crossing and vehicle counts will decrease dramatically in the future. Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the Town of Queen Creek’s application.

Handwritten signature of Dave Raber in black ink.

Dave Raber
Director
Safety Division

Handwritten signature of Brian H. Lehman in black ink.

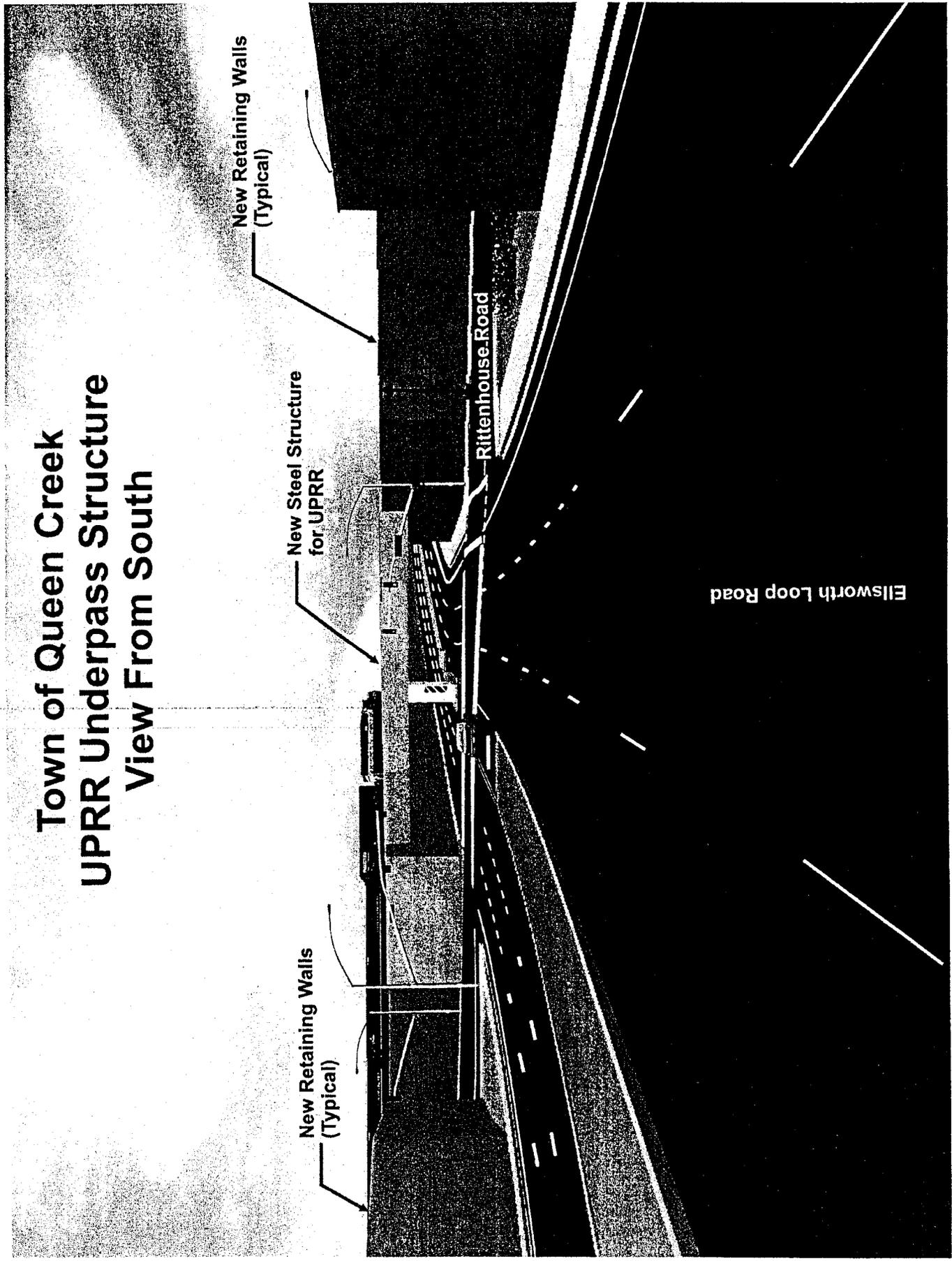
Brian H. Lehman
Railroad Supervisor
Safety Division

DR: BHL: cbw

Originator: Chris B. Watson

Attachments

Town of Queen Creek UPRR Underpass Structure View From South



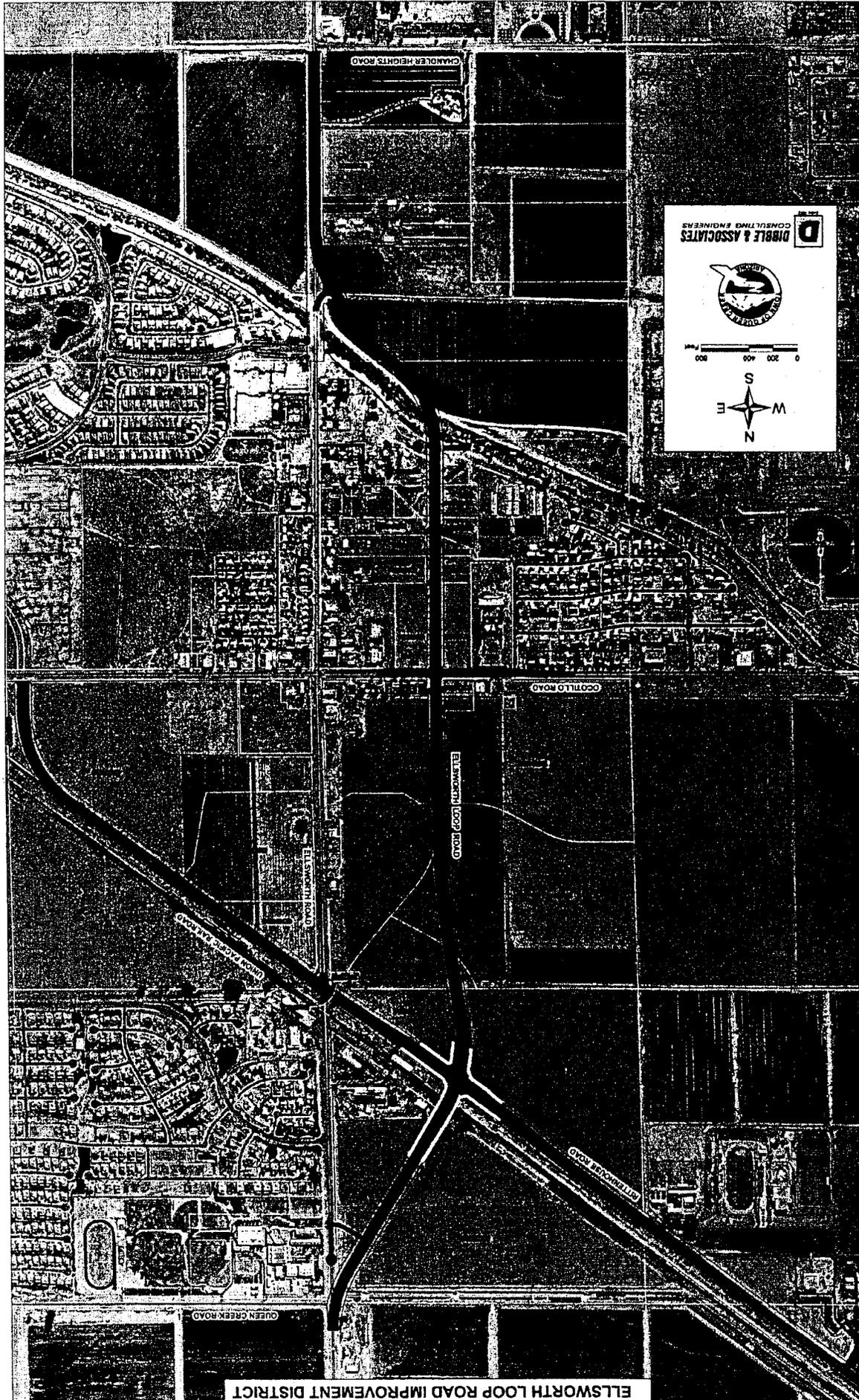
New Retaining Walls
(Typical)

New Steel Structure
for UPRR

New Retaining Walls
(Typical)

Rittenhouse Road

Ellsworth Loop Road



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 CONSULTING ENGINEERS

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ELLSWORTH LOOP ROAD IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

**TOWN OF
QUEEN CREEK**

**Union Pacific Railroad -
Roadway Crossing Map**

-  - Existing Roadway/UPRR Crossings
-  - UPRR/Roadway Underpass



Map Date - July 2007

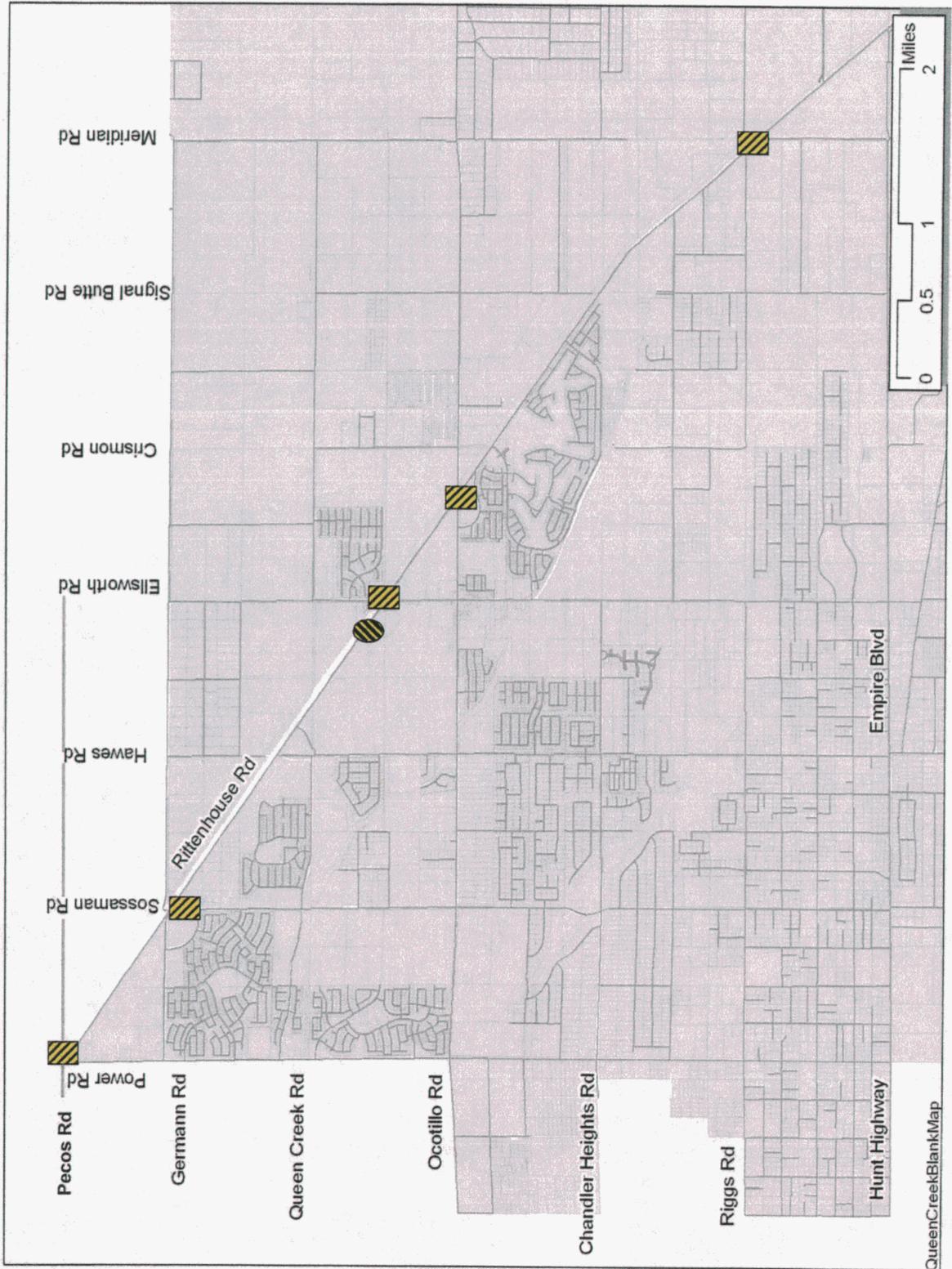


EXHIBIT A

