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STAFF MEMORANDUM

To: THE COMMISSION

From: John Mazza
Director
Safety Division

Date: February 7, 2017

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Arizona Corporation Commission

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RE: IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF THE ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO INSTALL A NEW GRADE SEPARATED CROSSING (DOT NO. 441-143P) AND FOR THE UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD TO REMOVE AN EXISTING AT-GRADE CROSSING (DOT NO. 741-343C, ACC NO. 477) AT STATE ROUTE 347 (SR347) IN THE CITY OF MARICOPA, PINAL COUNTY, ARIZONA.

DOCKET NO. RR-03639A-17-0020

Background

On January 25, 2017, the Arizona Department of Transportation (“ADOT”) filed with the Arizona Corporation Commission (“Commission”) a request for approval for ADOT to construct a new grade separated crossing (DOT No. 441-143P) and for the Union Pacific Railroad (“UPRR”) to remove an existing at-grade crossing (DOT No. 741-343C) at State Route 347 in the City of Maricopa (“City”), Pinal County, Arizona.

The Safety Division’s Railroad Safety Section, (“Staff”), ADOT and the UPRR participated in a diagnostic review meeting of the proposed improvements to this crossing. All parties present were in agreement to the proposed improvements at the crossings. The following is a breakdown of the crossing in this application, including information about the crossing that was provided to Staff by ADOT.

Project Overview

State Route 347 is currently an at-grade crossing that intersects the SR347 (John Wayne Parkway) and the Union Pacific tracks. The crossing is currently protected with flashing lights and gates, raised medians and a traffic pre-signal. The proposed project would allow ADOT to construct a grade-separated structure over both the UPRR tracks and the Maricopa-Casa Grande Highway on a realigned SR347. The easterly realignment and the bridge on SR347 will also be widened to 6 lanes. The existing at-grade crossing will remain open throughout most of the construction but once the bridge is in service, the UPRR will remove the crossing.

Construction is estimated to take 20-24 months to construct, and is tentatively scheduled to start in fall/winter of 2017.

Funding is coming from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), City of Maricopa, Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), ADOT and a portion of the bridge is being funded by UPRR. The total cost of the entire project is estimated to be \$36 million.

Public meetings have been conducted by ADOT in July-2012, June-2013, December-2014 and July-2016.

The posted speed limit on SR347 is 35 MPH. There have been four accidents at this crossing. A total of 5 fatalities are reported by the FRA.

Traffic data for SR347 was provided by ADOT through its Transportation Data Management System (<http://adot.ms2soft.com/tcds/tsearch.asp?loc=Adot&mod=>). In 2016, there were 20,331 (south) and 30,456 (north) vehicles per day ("VPD") at this crossing.

Alternative routes from this crossing are as follows: Porter Road is 2.5 miles to the southeast, and Ralston Road is 4.5 miles to the northwest.

Level of Service (LOS) is listed by ADOT as -B/B currently but expected to be F by 2040 if no action is taken.

Note: The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Geometric Design of Highways and Streets, 2004, states that the Level of Service characterizes the operating conditions on a facility in terms of traffic performance measures related to speed and travel time, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, and comfort and convenience. This is a measure of roadway congestion ranging from LOS A--least congested--to LOS F--most congested. LOS is one of the most common terms used to describe how "good" or how "bad" traffic is projected to be.

Train Data

Data provided by the FRA website, regarding train movements through this crossing are as follows:

Train Count: 38 trains per 24hr period - both freight and intercity passenger service
Maximum Train Speed: 75 mph
Thru Freight/Switching Moves: there are no switching movements through this crossing

Schools and Bus Routes

The following are schools near this crossing:

- Bright Minds Preschool 0.2 miles away
- Holsteiner Agricultural School 0.2 miles away
- Graysmark Academy 0.3 miles away
- Camino Montessori School 0.2 miles away
- Maricopa High School 0.1 miles away

Per Maricopa Unified School District and surrounding Districts there are 99 school bus crossings per day.

Hospitals

ADOT gave the following response about hospitals and emergency services vehicles:

There are no hospitals in Maricopa – only medical clinics.

- Dignity Health Chandler Regional Medical Center 1955 W Frye, Chandler, AZ

SR347 is not a major emergency service route.

Hazardous Materials

ADOT gave the following response when asked about vehicles transporting hazardous materials through this crossing:

Hazardous material traffic is unknown.

Zoning

Per maricopa-az.gov the project is entirely within the City of Maricopa and the immediate areas are zoned as follows:

General Rural Zone, Single Family Residence, Local Business, General Business, Multi-zone and Industrial

Grade Separation

This proposed project is for the construction of a new grade-separated crossing over the UPRR tracks and the SR347. Once the new grade separation is constructed and put into service, the existing at-grade crossing will be removed.

Staff Conclusions

Having reviewed all applicable data, Staff supports ADOT's application. Staff believes that constructing a grade separation is in the public's interest and is reasonable. Staff believes that the measures proposed by ADOT are consistent with other similar grade-separated crossings in the State and will provide for the public's safety. Therefore, Staff recommends approval of ADOT's application.

Chris Watson

Chris Watson
Railroad Safety Supervisor
Safety Division

Originator: CW

On this 10th day of February, 2017, the foregoing document was filed with Docket Control as a Staff Report, and copies of the foregoing were mailed on behalf of the Safety Division to the following who have not consented to email service. On this date or as soon as possible thereafter, the Commission's eDocket program will automatically email a link to the foregoing to the following who have consented to email service.

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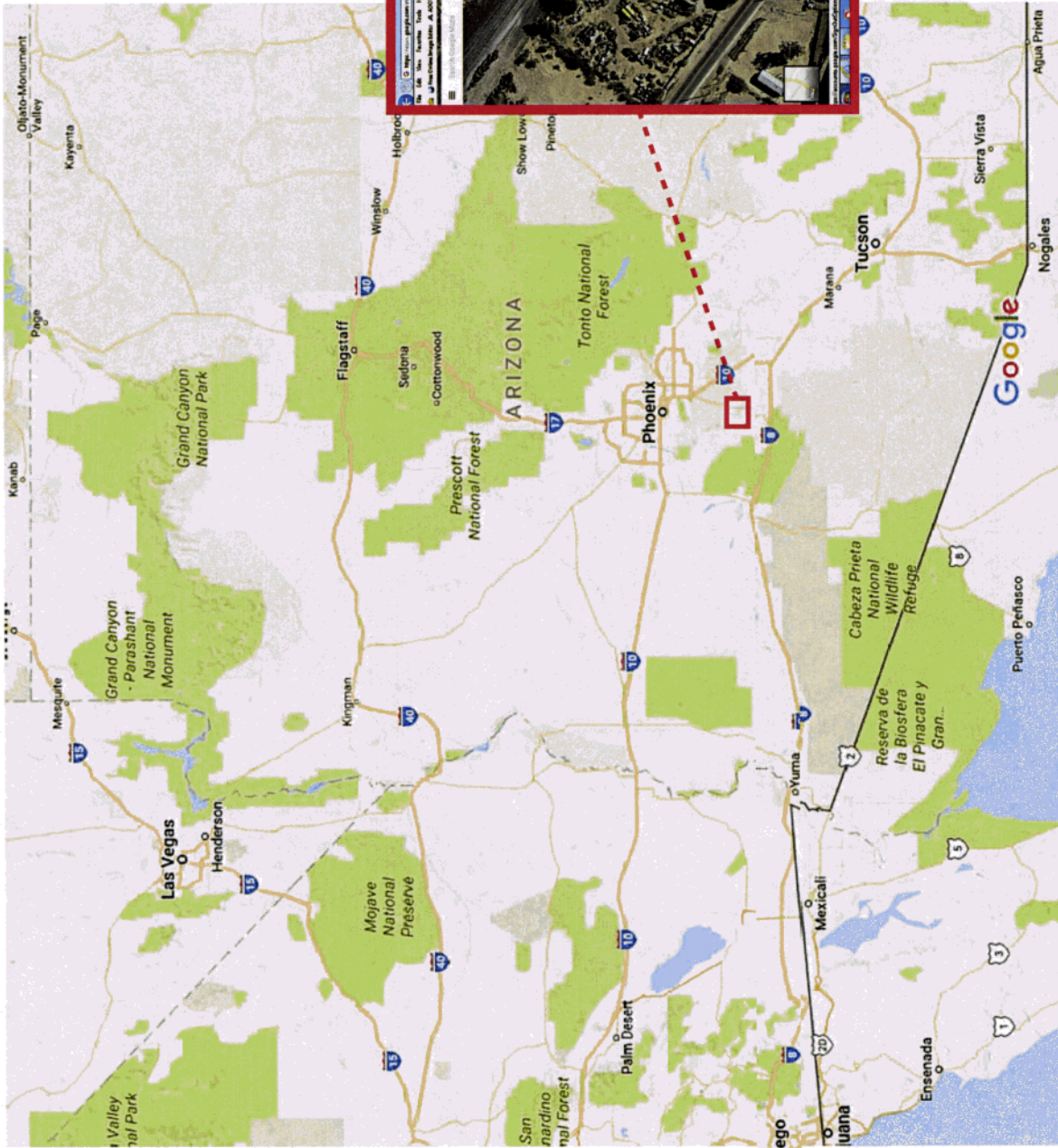
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Vicinity Map
Grade Separation Project
State Route 347 and Union Pacific
RR Tracks DOT#441-143P
City of Maricopa, Pinal County, AZ

