

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

**November 22, 2010**

Recently many questions have come up from Sedona citizens regarding the possibility of a Route Transfer of SR 89A in West Sedona and what it means to the City. The following information will hopefully answer those questions and inform the community about the reasons why the City is considering a Route Transfer.

### **1. What is a Route Transfer?**

A route transfer is a change of ownership of a state highway, including maintenance and operation, from the Arizona Department of Transportation to a municipality – the City of Sedona in this case. It can occur when a state highway is functioning more like a city street than a state highway and/or a community decides it is in its best interest to obtain control of the highway. Route Transfers have occurred all over the state.

### **2. Why is ADOT proposing a Route Transfer of SR 89A in West Sedona?**

Continuous roadway lighting is ADOT's proposed solution to pedestrian, vehicular and bicycle safety issues on SR 89A. The City has officially informed ADOT that it is opposed to installation of continuous roadway lighting. It is the Council's position that the lighting does not address safety issues during the daytime and that there are other solutions that provide a higher degree of overall safety, both day and night. ADOT has informed the City that it intends to install the lighting between Airport Road and Dry Creek Road in 2011 unless the City approves a Route Transfer.

### **3. What do negotiations consist of between the City and ADOT?**

The City staff is negotiating with ADOT staff on the terms of a possible Route Transfer which would include proposed funding from ADOT to enable the City to:

- maintain the road;
- construct alternative pedestrian, vehicular and bicycle safety improvements in lieu of the continuous roadway lighting; and
- correct roadway deficiencies identified by the City.

### **4. When will the results of the negotiations be made public?**

The results of the negotiations will be made public at a City Council meeting on November 23, 2010.

### **5. Does the fact that the negotiations are taking place mean that the City will definitely approve a Route Transfer?**

No. The City Council has stated on numerous occasions that, until it has evaluated all of the information related to the transfer, including the results of the negotiations, an independent engineering assessment, the potential availability of federal and state funding, and feedback from the community, it will not make a decision regarding the transfer.

#### **6. Why is Sedona even considering a Route Transfer of SR 89A in West Sedona?**

The City Council adopted a resolution on May 25, 2010, formally opposing continuous roadway lighting because installation of the continuous lighting did not address daytime safety concerns, would change the visual character of the West Sedona corridor and would adversely impact dark skies. Further, the majority of members of the community who attended public meetings regarding the continuous roadway lighting were opposed to the project. The City also sees value in “controlling its own destiny” in terms of future development of the SR 89A corridor. ADOT has stated that, unless the City accepts a Route Transfer, it will install the continuous roadway lighting.

#### **7. Are there options other than a Route Transfer or continuous roadway lighting?**

No. Despite numerous attempts by the City to convince ADOT to consider alternative solutions for roadway safety, ADOT has insisted that, if the City does not approve the Route Transfer, it will proceed with the installation of continuous roadway lighting. Numerous attempts have been made to convince ADOT to install alternative roadway safety improvements and to keep ownership of the road. The Mayor, Council and staff members have held numerous meetings with ADOT officials, including the Director of ADOT and members of the State Transportation Board. Additionally, numerous presentations have been made by community members to the State Transportation Board to persuade ADOT to consider other alternatives. The Mayor has also discussed the issue with the Governor in an attempt to convince her to intervene on behalf of the City.

#### **8. How can the City afford to own SR 89A in West Sedona?**

Much of this depends on the financial support that ADOT offers the City as part of the Route Transfer negotiations. Essentially, ADOT’s offer would need to be sufficient enough to make financial sense. The City’s cost benefit analysis would need to demonstrate that the Route Transfer would not create irresponsible and unmanageable financial burdens on the City in the future.

#### **9. It has been said that it could cost the City as much as \$15 million to take over SR 89A in West Sedona. Is this true?**

The SR 89A Route Transfer Study, conducted by ADOT and presented to City Council in February, identified road deficiencies and repair costs as well as ongoing annual maintenance costs for the road. City staff has evaluated the financial implications of the deficiencies and maintenance requirements so the City has a good understanding of those costs. However, the Study did not identify the costs of alternative pedestrian, vehicular and bicycle safety improvements in lieu of continuous roadway lighting. CivTech Engineering was hired by the City to review the ADOT Route Transfer Study for completeness and accuracy and to prepare cost estimates for alternative safety improvements so the City Council understands the total potential costs of a Route Transfer. Until CivTech Engineering completes its study, this information is not available. The engineering study is scheduled to be completed in early November and will be presented to Council on November 23, 2010. The other factor that must be considered in evaluating the total cost to the City is the amount of financial commitment ADOT is willing to make as part of a Route Transfer. This financial contribution will potentially significantly reduce the costs to the City.

#### **10. What is the daytime and nighttime accident level on SR 89A?**

No roadway collision-related fatalities have occurred on SR 89A since April 2006. Sedona Police Department records show that there have been 307 collisions on SR 89A between Dry Creek Road and Soldiers Pass Road from 2007 through 2009. A total of 259 collisions happened between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., while 48 collisions occurred between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. A total of 65 injury collisions have occurred in the three years, 55 between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. and 10 between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. The City Council believes that a comprehensive approach to SR 89A safety alternatives needs to be addressed that includes both daytime and nighttime solutions.

#### **11. How is the City's liability affected by a Route Transfer?**

Currently, ADOT as the owner of the roadway, is primarily liable for the design and condition of SR 89A. With a Route Transfer, the City would assume all future liability as sole owner of the roadway. This is why, with a Route Transfer, the City would want to insure that it is receiving a roadway that is in good condition, and that there is funding available for making any necessary safety improvements. The City, like most small rural cities in Arizona, is a member of the Arizona Municipal Risk Pool. Cities pay annual premiums for the services provided by the Pool, and if a lawsuit were filed against the City, it is expected that the Pool would defend the City as it has in the past. Representatives of the Arizona Municipal Risk pool have informed the City that liability insurance premiums will increase a few hundred dollars per year to provide the increased coverage for SR 89A if the City agrees to a Route Transfer.

#### **12. What are the construction scenarios for a city-owned SR 89A and an ADOT-owned SR 89A?**

Regardless of who owns the road, ADOT will install the traffic signal at Andante and SR 89A and repave the road in 2011 or 2012. If the City does not take ownership of the road, then ADOT will proceed in spring 2011 with the installation of continuous roadway lighting, the installation of a traffic signal at Andante and the repaving of SR 89A. If the City takes ownership of the road, an engineering firm will be hired to develop a design concept for alternative safety improvements. This process would involve significant community participation. ADOT repaving and City-designed improvements would most likely begin in 2012 or 2013.

**13. If the City approves the Route Transfer, how will the City handle the maintenance and improvement program on SR 89A financially?**

Would there be access to outside money to help with ongoing maintenance and operation of the roadway? Depending on the outcome of the negotiations, ADOT will provide the City funding for both ongoing maintenance and construction of safety improvements for a determined amount of time. Since the negotiations are not finished, it is not possible to determine if the financial commitment from ADOT will be sufficient to address these issues to the satisfaction of the City. Initially, ADOT offered \$75,000 per year for ten years for maintaining the road, and \$2.75 million for constructing alternative safety improvements. The City is currently negotiating with ADOT to obtain more financial support. Currently the City is studying if there would be additional federal and state funding available to help pay for the costs associated with the road ownership. The results of the study will be presented to City Council on November 23.

**14. What are the potential advantages of Sedona owning SR 89A?**

Local control. It will provide the City control of a very important roadway going through the heart of the community. It will allow the City and the community to create a vision for West Sedona that can be implemented without the interference of another level of government. It will provide the City the opportunity to construct alternative safety improvements that will improve both daytime and nighttime safety. Also, if the negotiations are successful, and ADOT provides sufficient funding to address the City's concerns, the City will potentially incur significantly reduced costs over the next 15-20 years for maintaining and operating SR 89A.

**15. What are the potential disadvantages of Sedona owning SR 89A?**

There are three potential disadvantages: 1) the City will be assuming sole liability for the road; 2) ultimately, the City will be assuming complete financial responsibility for the road; and 3) unforeseen road deficiencies or costs to maintain the roadway could be discovered after the route transfer. Other cities that have accepted a route transfer have informed us that it is extremely important that the City conduct a thorough analysis of the road and negotiate an

appropriate amount of financial support from ADOT.

**16. If the City accepts the Route Transfer, what types of improvements will be considered?**

No decisions have been made regarding the types of alternative road safety improvements. Future improvements that may be considered include but are not limited to strategic medians, roundabouts, lighted pedestrian crosswalks, pedestrian lighting, additional traffic signals, pedestrian barriers, and safety islands. An extensive financial analysis and public process would take place to gather citizen input on the safety alternatives.

**17. What other cities in Arizona have accepted Route Transfers and what has been their experience afterwards?**

The cities of Yuma, Flagstaff, Winslow, Quartzite, Somerton, Prescott, and Wickenburg have accepted Route Transfers over the last few years. The experiences of these cities were generally positive but some cities did cite issues of concern. All agreed that obtaining control of the road was a very important goal for their community. None of the cities contacted expressed regret about accepting the Route Transfer. One city recommended that Sedona be very thorough in identifying road deficiencies and negotiating appropriate compensation for road costs. Another city recommended that Sedona not delay the design and construction of alternative road improvements because construction costs can increase over time. To maximize the use of ADOT funds, it is better to make decisions in a reasonable time frame.

**18. Could ADOT transfer ownership of SR 89A to the City whether the City chose to do so or not?**

Yes. ADOT has the statutory right to transfer sections of state highways located within the boundaries of a city or town by giving four years notice and bringing the highway up to certain standards. In this case, ADOT would install the continuous roadway lighting on SR 89A. If this were to happen, ADOT has no obligation to provide any of the maintenance or safety improvement funds now being discussed.

If you have additional questions or would like further information, please contact the City Manager's Office at (928) 204-7127.