



**FAQ's from
Pyramid McCarran Intersection Improvement
Community Meeting
March 24, 2010**

1. Why didn't you plan better? RTC planners should have done something about this intersection before approving all the growth in Spanish Springs.

The Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) is not a land use planning agency, nor does it approve changes in land use or new development projects in the region. What the RTC does do is long range transportation planning for the Truckee Meadows region as its role as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) requires. The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is a long range (a minimum of 20 years) plan of programs and projects needed to address population and employment projections developed by the Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency in consultation with the local jurisdictions. Growth in the Spanish Springs Valley has been approved by the City of Sparks and Washoe County. The RTP plans for future highway and transit infrastructure to meet the planned growth. As land use decisions are made, the RTP must be updated at a minimum of every four years to reflect those decisions. Land use planners and decision makers are advised by the RTC of the potential impact of their decisions on the transportation system.

The need for improvements to this intersection was recognized in the 1999 Pyramid Highway Management Plan and then incorporated into the 2030 RTP adopted in 2001. The 2001 RTP included an item to be addressed in the mid-term (2007-2012) to bring the entire length of McCarran Boulevard up to High Access Control Standards. It also suggested that Urban Interchanges should be considered as a tool to be used to accomplish that end. The 2004 update to the 2030 RTP showed more specifically a need to construct 12 grade-separated intersections on McCarran Boulevard by 2030 due to high traffic volumes and anticipated congestion. (McCarran and Pyramid is the first of those intersections to be addressed. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to study this intersection was begun in 2005.) The most recent version of the RTP, adopted in 2008, re-affirms the need for these projects, six of which are to be undertaken by 2018.

2. Why don't you build the Disc Drive to US-395 Connection first? You would divert all the congestion away from this intersection.

Current population projections show the need for both projects to be built by 2030. Congestion and safety are already problems at the intersection, and will continue to get worse until improvements are made there.

The Pyramid Freeway US-395 Connection is being studied and developed concurrently with the Pyramid McCarran Intersection Improvement Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). An EIS for the Pyramid Freeway US-395 Connection was begun in 2007 and is about 50% complete. However, that project is much larger and more complex than the Pyramid McCarran Intersection Project and involves multiple jurisdictions and agencies. There are many

challenges associated with the Pyramid Freeway US-395 Connection project. Planning level estimates indicate it will cost in the neighborhood of 10 times as much as the intersection project. Realistically, it will be 2025-2030 before a connection to US 395 from Pyramid Highway can be funded and constructed.

3. Why don't you build the Northwest (NW) Arterial from Eagle Canyon Drive to Sun Valley? That would relieve congestion on Pyramid Way all the way to McCarran and would be shorter and cheaper and not take any homes.

A future road, known as the West Sun Valley Arterial, or sometimes called the Northwest Arterial, is planned as a future need, but not until population increases further north in Spanish Springs and beyond (such as the proposed Spring Mountain development). The land use plans and population forecasts show that the short term and mid-term travel demand is for congestion relief further south in the Pyramid corridor, culminating with the highest traffic volumes at the Pyramid McCarran intersection.

4. Are you planning on widening Wedekind Road?

No. Wedekind Road is not planned to be widened. It is anticipated that improvements to the Pyramid/McCarran intersection will divert traffic from using Wedekind Road as a bypass.

5. Why spend millions on this intersection? It costs too much and is a waste of taxpayers' money.

Much of the cost of the project is for Right-of-Way acquisition. Yes, it is an expensive project. These types of projects, the Urban Intersections, will be increasingly more costly to build over time as the available space to build them becomes more difficult and expensive to acquire. However, as with this project, alternatives are just as expensive, if not more so (the proposed "alternative" to this project, the Pyramid US-395 Connection, is estimated at over \$650 million).

6. If you fix Pyramid/McCarran intersection, won't the congestion just be made worse at other intersections such as Rock/McCarran, 4th/McCarran, Queen/Pyramid, Roberta/Pyramid and others?

We are studying these intersections too. The peak traffic volumes may be slightly elevated at nearby intersections but not to the threshold of failure. For example, as more southbound vehicles pass through the Pyramid McCarran intersection, they will distribute to the east, west and south, leading away from the intersection. Our analysis shows the Rock/McCarran, Queen/Pyramid, 4th/McCarran, Roberta/Pyramid, and York/Pyramid intersections will maintain acceptable levels of service after the project is built.

7. I am concerned about the property acquisition process. I am "upside down" on my mortgage; my home isn't worth as much as I owe on it. If you buy it for "fair market value," I will still owe money on it and be homeless.

The Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) will be acquiring all property necessary for the right-of-way for this project. NDOT has advised that the acquisition procedures it will follow will permit it to pursue an administrative settlement that will make up the difference between fair market value and the outstanding mortgage, if the appraised value is less than the mortgage.

8. What is the environmental study going to consider? Why look at ‘bugs and bunnies’ when people’s lives are at stake? Why haven’t the consultants been back to do the noise study?

The Environmental Impact Statement investigation will look at the following potential impacts:

- *Social & Economic*
- *Relocation Impacts*
- *Environmental Justice (ensures impacts are not weighted disproportionately toward economically disadvantaged neighborhoods)*
- *Land Use*
- *Historic Resources*
- *Archaeological Resources*
- *Noise*
- *Visual Effects*
- *Water Quality*
- *Floodplains*
- *Hazardous Waste/Materials*
- *Air Quality*
- *Biological Resources*
- *Section 4(f) (Publically owned parks, recreation areas, wildlife/waterfowl refuges, significant historic sites)*
- *Traffic/Pedestrians/Bicycles*
- *Cumulative/Secondary Impacts*

If any impacts in any of these categories are determined to be significant, a mitigation plan must be developed as part of the project. For example, if the right-of-way acquisitions for this project are determined to be a significant impact to the community, they must be mitigated by not only following the Uniform Act (see Q7. above), but also by taking measures to keep the neighborhoods, shopping centers, church and school campuses, etc. viable and cohesive. So, by law, we must look at all environmental issues, including “bugs and bunnies” (Biological Resources) and all the other things listed above. But that list also includes categories which are concerned with the human impacts.

9. Please don’t close off Emerson Way! You will make access to Village Green and the Immaculate Conception Church unacceptable. What about emergency response access? Queen Way/McCarran will be the only way in/out and it is already overloaded and dangerous. U-turns will be too dangerous.

The RTC is working with representatives from the Immaculate Conception Church (ICC), the Catholic Diocese of Reno and Village Green residents to understand the challenges of the project we all face and together develop solutions that will benefit these communities. The primary reason Emerson Way access would be reduced to “right-in right-out” is safety; years of data show that uncontrolled left turn movements across two lanes or more of on-coming traffic are very high risk movements. Left turns and U-turns at signalized intersections with protected left turn and U-turn arrows are historically safer movements. Emergency response access will be maintained at Emerson at the request of the Sparks Fire Department. The McCarran Boulevard entrance to the ICC, their primary access, will not be significantly altered. In addition, improvements to the Pyramid/Queen Way intersection will make all movements there safer and more efficiently move Village Green and ICC traffic to and from Pyramid Way.

10. Can you honestly say you will not disrupt access to the ICC Catholic Church during construction? Your plans show major disruption to the main entrance on McCarran.

Yes. Access to the ICC will be maintained for all church activities. Close coordination will be maintained with the diocese, pastor, and administrators before and during construction to ensure the engineers, contractors, and the church are aware of the project schedule and on the same page at all times. Any plans you have seen up to this point are preliminary and should not be considered final or representative of a preferred alternative. The main entrance to the church will continue to be operational throughout construction and after the project is completed.

11. RTC says one of the major needs for this project is to improve safety; that this intersection has the highest crash rate in Sparks. Isn't this just because of the commuters running red lights and driving too fast? Won't improving the intersection just speed the drivers up and make the crashes worse?

Improved safety is one of the primary goals of this project. Drivers who cheat on the red lights are exhibiting frustration with the congestion and delay they experience from the inadequate capacity of the system. The improvements will not necessarily speed up traffic; they will reduce the “stop and go” congestion and delay, thereby reducing travel time and reducing driver frustration, thus helping to make the intersection safer.

12. The Immaculate Conception Church has complied with all the conditions of its Special Use Permit. If you alter the main entrance or send more traffic through Village Green neighborhood, won't the special use permit be invalidated? Can RTC legally do that?

RTC is working closely with representatives from the Catholic Diocese of Reno, Immaculate Conception Church, City of Sparks, and NDOT to ensure the Special Use Permit is not jeopardized. The main entrance to the ICC on McCarran will remain viable during and after construction. Therefore, no additional traffic through Village Green should be encouraged.