

CG will expand roads with city

Major corridors to be planned

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With a detour here and there from initial concepts, Casa Grande continues planning for a system of roads that will ease traffic congestion as the city grows.

The preferred plan, still far in the future, is to have a beltway around the city, tying in Val Vista Boulevard, Montgomery Road and Interstates 8 and 10.

I-10 is now being widened to three lanes in each direction from the



Thompson

Marana area to Pinal Air Park Road, with future work making it three lanes from there to Selma Highway, with some work on I-8 as far west as Henness Road.

The Arizona Department of Transportation has said it has no idea, because of difficulties of negotiating with the Gila River Indian Community, of when there could be three lanes in each direction from Selma Highway to the Chandler area. The agency has said that the widening from Pinal Air Park Road to Selma Highway, with a new interchange at the I-8 junction, is four to five years away.

Meanwhile, Casa Grande has been working on its latest small-area transportation plan, approved in July.

City officials will now ask the City Council to approve two major corridor studies — Val Vista and linking Pinal Avenue to ChuiChu

Road.

Montgomery Road, to the west, has been pushed aside for the moment.

“The reason we’re not jumping out to Montgomery right now and doing a corridor study on that this year is because of the battle that’s ensuing between Arizona Water Company and Global Water on who’s going to serve that area,” City Manager Jim Thompson said during an interview with the Casa Grande Dispatch.

“Until a decision is made, really not much is going to happen out there, so we’re not going to jump out there and do a corridor study that may sit on the shelf for three or four years when we have two other areas.

“With linking Pinal and ChuiChu,

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the reason why we really want to do that is that ChuiChu goes all the way to Mexico. Originally there was no connection."

For practical purposes, Pinal ends just south of Florence Boulevard. Getting to ChuiChu, which is Florence Street inside the city, means going east on Florence or Second Street and then south or winding through an industrial area to get to Florence Street.

Linking Pinal and ChuiChu would mean widening and straightening what is known as Five Points, where Florence Boulevard, Second Street, Pinal and the Gila Bend Highway meet, but nothing has been decided.

That would be part of the corridor study.

"What a corridor study encompasses is you look at a major corridor, a step up from a major arterial (such as Pinal or Florence)," Thompson said. "And in the case of Val Vista you look at it as a highway throughout that whole area, or start off as a parkway, a seven-lane-type design."

There will be difficulties with Val Vista because previous councils did not set aside enough right of way for a major highway, allowing residences close to the present road.

"That's one of the things we're going to look at — are you going to stay on the current alignment and then have issues with frontage prop-

erties and so forth, because of the residential, or elevate it, because of the smaller right of way that was acquired way back when," Thompson said.

"Keep in mind that our last transportation study that was done a while back only called for five-lane roads at that time as our major arterials; now our major arterials are seven.

"At that time, Val Vista was downgraded in that study from an expressway to a major arterial, which would have been five lanes. We've re-upgraded in the new small-area transportation plan back to an expressway, or seven lanes."

Through the former Copper Mountain Ranch development, now known as Desert Color, the city has obtained 300 feet of right of way for an expressway, Thompson said, which is a major portion of Val Vista.

Thompson said a seven-lane Val Vista would also benefit the city of Maricopa, giving it another way to get to I-10. Maricopa officials, however, have favored widening the Maricopa-Casa Grande Highway, which connects with Cottonwood Lane.

Because of the buildings lining lower Pinal Avenue, Thompson said, it would remain its present two lanes in each direction with a center turning lane.

How five lanes would be added from Five Points to ChuiChu remains unanswered.

"That's what the corridor study

will tell us, what size of right of way, and if it's even feasible," Thompson said. "It may come back that it's not even feasible to do, but we have to look at it. And if it is feasible, what issues we face. It may be that some have to be moved, relocated. It may be that we create a whole new alignment, maybe we turn somewhere else. There's a lot of ways to align roads, not to say those two are going to be aligned at that point at that location. We could turn Pinal, sooner or later we could take ChuiChu, bend it all over the place."

Thompson said there are few north-south routes that run through from the older parts of town.

"Thornton dead-ends at Kortsen, Trekell is going to turn and run into Pinal out in the Villago subdivision. The same with Peart — in all the development agreements done before I got here it goes to a three-lane road from a seven-lane arterial. Henness Road is my last chance to get a major north-south."

Florence Boulevard will eventually be widened from Pottebaum Avenue east and Pinal widened from Kortsen Road north, but downtown will remain pretty much the same.

"The core of town is going to be a pinch point for transportation, unless we went out and condemned and everything else, but that's not something we look to do," Thompson said. "So we will have a pinch point."