

Road Safety Assessment US 70, MP 294 to 298



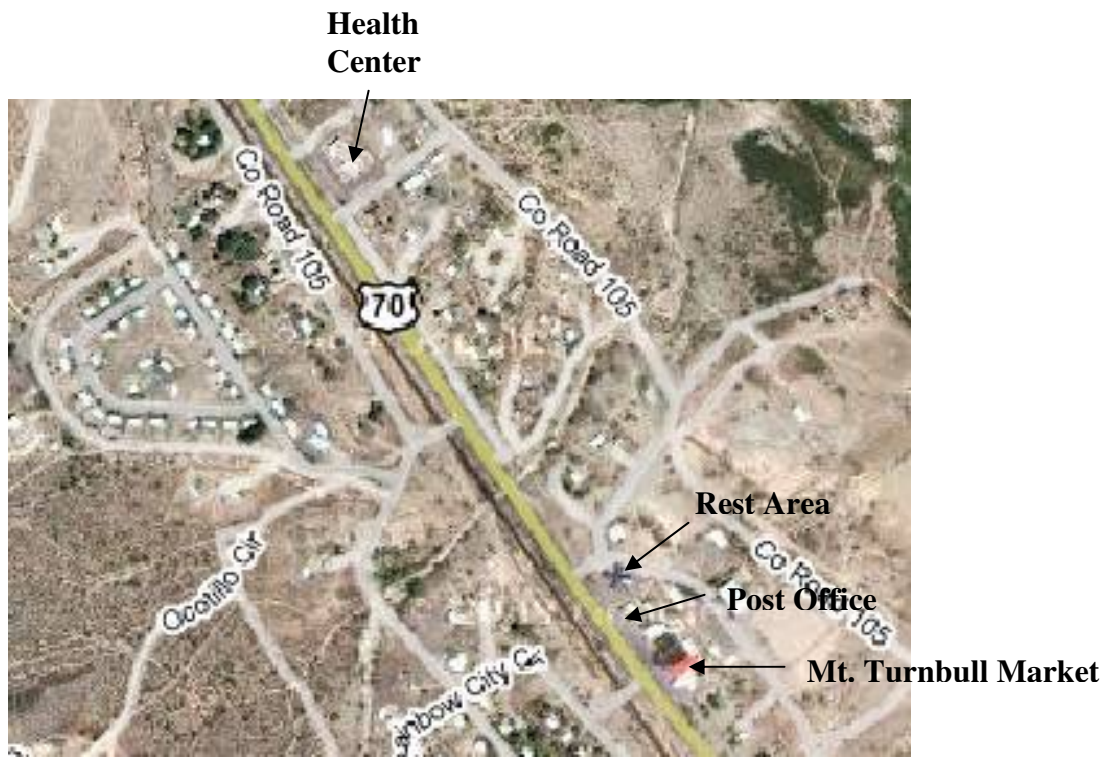
ADOT Safford District San Carlos Apache Tribe

September 15-17, 2009

**Arizona Road Safety Assessment Program
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Location Map

Road Safety Assessment Report

US 70, MP 294 to 298

ADOT Safford District

San Carlos Apache Tribe

September 15-17, 2009

Request: This Road Safety Assessment (RSA) of US 70 from milepost 294 to 298 in Bylas was requested by the ADOT Safford District because the San Carlos Apache Tribe is updating its Long Range Transportation Plan and wanted to address traffic safety, especially pedestrian safety.

RSA Process: A Road Safety Assessment is a formal examination of user safety of a future or existing roadway by an independent, multi-disciplinary assessment team which includes experienced and knowledgeable members. RSAs have been shown to help promote safety by identifying a range of safety issues, promoting awareness of safe transportation planning, design, construction, and maintenance practices, integrating multimodal concerns, and considering human factors.

The assessment team has conducted this assessment to the best of its abilities within the time allotted. The compiled recommendations are based upon daytime and nighttime site reviews, background and technical information provided during the Start-up Meeting and Preliminary Findings Presentation, as well as an evaluation of recent crash data. While every attempt has been made to identify safety issues, the safety performance of the roadway remains the responsibility of the roadway owners and roadway users.

Assessment Team: The RSA was conducted on Tuesday and Wednesday, September 15-16. The assessment team was led by the Arizona RSA Program Manager and team members were:

- Mike Blankenship, P.E., RSA Program Manager, ADOT Traffic HES
- Misty Dayzie, ADOT Multimodal Planning Division
- Tom Engel, ADOT Safford District
- Michael Sanders, ADOT Multimodal Planning Division
- Ed Stillings, FHWA
- Tomi St. Mars, RN, MSN, AZ Dept. of Health Services

Background: This section of US 70 is a two lane rural minor arterial roadway with a posted speed limit of 50 mph. The 2008 average daily traffic (ADT) volume is 3,100 vehicles per day. US 70 runs through the San Carlos Apache Tribe Reservation, and the segment analyzed for this RSA bisects the Bylas community.

Start-up Meeting: The assessment team met to discuss background information from 9:30 to 11:00 AM on September 15, 2009 at the Albert Goseyun Memorial Exhibit Hall in Bylas. In addition to the RSA team members, participants included Bill Harmon, ADOT Safford District, Barney Bigman and Stephanie Titla, San Carlos Apache Tribe Transportation, and Jerry James, San Carlos Police Department (SCPD). Following is a summary of the information provided during the Start-up Meeting.

Bylas is considered a walking community. The community expects an increase in transit service with the recent acquisition of additional vans. Domestic animals in the right-of-way are an issue. The Tribe is developing an access management plan. Excessive speeds are an issue, as are ADA concerns. Traffic volumes triple when special events are held in the area. Hunting, camping, and fishing are attractions that bring tourists to the area. The Tribe submitted a Transportation Enhancement Program application to extend the existing pedestrian pathway to the Calva Road turnoff and to provide gateway enhancement along US 70 at the east entrance to the community. ADOT is conducting a study to improve four intersections on US 70 in Bylas. According to the Safford District Engineer, the original street lights had some mast arms that fell off, and the current lights are retrofits. A small business incubator project is scheduled to begin construction by the end of 2009. The SCPD staffing level is one officer per shift in Bylas.

Crash Data Analysis: The most recent ten years of crash data (January 1, 1999 to December 31, 2008) was collected from the ADOT Motor Vehicle Division Traffic Records Group. This data showed that there were 19 crashes along this 4-mile section of US 70, including six fatal crashes with nine fatalities. Additional crash statistics based on ADOT crash data and traffic volumes:

- 39 crashes/100 million vehicle-miles (state average is 75 crashes/100 MVM for 2-lane roads)
- 12.2 fatal crashes/100 MVM (state average is 3.5 fatal crashes/100 MVM for 2-lane roads)
- 32% fatal crashes (state average < 1%)
- 67% of fatal crashes are pedestrian (state average is 14%)
- 42% dark/dawn
- 37% single vehicle
- 32% alcohol
- 26% rear-end
- 21% pedestrian (all occurred at night)
- 11% angle

It should be noted that the SCPD indicated that 46 crashes occurred over the past five years (2004 to 2008) on this section of US 70. Only 4 of these crashes show up in the ADOT crash database.

Site Review Observations: Daytime site reviews were conducted on September 15 (11:00 AM to 12:30 PM, 1:00 to 4:00 PM) and September 16 (7:30 to 9:00 AM), with a nighttime review on September 15 (8:15 to 8:45 PM). Site reviews consisted of driving and walking the corridor in addition to observing road users on the roadway. The weather was clear and warm.

The following current practices appear to foster safer operation along this corridor:

- Paved pathway along the north side of US 70, with good buffer space between the path and US 70
- Right-of-way fencing with limited pedestrian openings
- Street lighting along the south side of US 70
- Turn lanes at some intersections
- Raised pavement markers
- EMS, health center, and medical helicopter in the immediate area
- Paved shoulders
- Pavement in good condition
- Parallel side streets provide connectivity within the community; speed humps in community

Potential opportunities to improve the safety performance of US 70 in Bylas as observed by the RSA Team were grouped into the following categories:

Mt. Turnbull Market Area

Multiple undefined entrances along US 70 at the Mt. Turnbull Market, the post office, and the vendor area create vehicular and pedestrian conflicts since there are no defined areas for entering and exiting vehicles and for pedestrians using the paved pathway that runs east and west of this area. It is recommended that curb be installed on the north side of US 70 to define and limit access points from the east side of the Market to the Bylas Rest Area. The east access at the Market is 70 feet in width. Vehicles were observed making acute angle turn maneuvers in and out of this access. Consideration should be given to closing the east access to the Market. If this is not an option, this 70-foot wide opening should be narrowed to a standard 40-foot width driveway. Another option is to make this access an entrance only.

The 3.5-mile long paved pathway on the north side of US 70 is a nice safety feature for pedestrians and bicyclists. However, the pathway is discontinuous at the busiest activity center, the Mt. Turnbull Market/Post Office area. Pedestrians in this area have no defined pathway, and are in conflict with vehicles entering, exiting, and parking at the Market and Post Office. It is recommended that a pedestrian path or sidewalk be installed through the Market/Post Office circulation areas to connect the existing paved path and to better define the pedestrian way. This path should be concrete to distinguish it from the paved parking/circulation area.

The future incubator development in the Post Office area will create additional vehicle/pedestrian conflicts here. The incubator internal circulation should be addressed for both vehicles and pedestrians. There may be a need for a defined pedestrian path between the proposed incubator amphitheater and the Mt. Turnbull Market. The incubator development also includes offices and a new post office, and the Tribe is considering providing access to these buildings through the Mt. Turnbull Market east access. If this Market driveway is used for access to the new development, it is recommended that the access width be narrowed to no more than 40 feet, and the access be used for entrance only. Also, the existing westbound right-turn lane should be extended further to the east to provide adequate deceleration distance for traffic slowing to turn into this entrance.

The side road through lanes are offset and do not line up at the intersection of the Market driveway and Centerpoint Entrance. The offset lanes can lead to drivers crossing US 70 and inadvertently encroaching on the oncoming lane, creating a possible head-on or sideswipe crash scenario. The offset is approximately 12 feet. It is recommended that this intersection be re-aligned to remove the offset. This could be partially accomplished by re-striping the approach lanes on the Market side of the intersection so that the far right lane is a shared right and through lane.



Undefined access at post office/vendor area



70-foot opening at Mt. Turnbull Market, located at the right-turn lane taper



Paved pathway east of the Mt. Turnbull Market ends at the Market area



Paved pathway west of the post office ends at the post office area



Offset through lanes at Market driveway intersection

Pedestrians

Residences on the south side of US 70 and activity centers and services on the north side of US 70 create the need for vehicles and pedestrians to cross US 70. Additionally, there are many pedestrian passes through the right-of-way fence on both sides of US 70. This leads to pedestrians crossing US 70 in various locations at various times. While much of the pedestrian crossing activities occur near the Market/Post Office area, a number of pedestrians were observed crossing US 70 at other locations throughout Bylas. Pedestrians observed crossing US 70 were of various ages and abilities, including an elderly woman walking with the aid of a cane and a younger woman pushing a baby stroller. There are ADA-compatibility issues at the pedestrian gates and cattle guards at side road intersections with US 70. There are also a few large cracks on the paved pathway. The RSA Team also observed pedestrians walking along the south side of US 70 and worn pathways indicating pedestrian activity on this side of US 70. The only pedestrian warning sign along US 70 (excluding school crossing signs) was at milepost 294.3 for the eastbound direction. This is a pedestrian crossing symbol sign with a “Next 2 Miles” plaque. The westbound direction does not have this sign. The following recommendations address pedestrian issues:

An evaluation of the appropriateness of the current 50 mph speed limit should be conducted, considering additional factors in addition to 85th percentile speed, including roadside development, pedestrian activity, and crash experience. It should be noted that communities east and west of Bylas have 45 mph speed zones for US 70 (Ft. Thomas and Peridot). A 5 mph reduction in mean travel speed, from 50 to 45 mph, can provide a 29% reduction in injury crashes and a 52% reduction in fatal crashes (NCHRP Report 617, *Accident Modification Factors for Traffic Engineering and ITS Improvements*). This crash reduction is for all vehicle crashes, including pedestrian crashes.

Additional pedestrian crossing warning signs, with flashing lights, should be installed. These should be installed for both eastbound and westbound directions, particularly in the Market/Post Office and Health Center areas. Consideration should be given to eliminating the passing zones through Bylas. These passing zones are located at mileposts 294.6 to 295.5 and 296.5 to 297.6. This would help “calm” traffic through the community.

There are numerous, poorly-located pedestrian passes which encourage and allow crossings at many locations along US 70. A study should be conducted to evaluate the origins and destinations, where and how many pedestrians are crossing US 70, and to determine if any pedestrian gates can be eliminated to reduce the number of pedestrian crossing locations. ADOT’s Planning Assistance for Rural Areas (PARA) funds can be used for this type of study. PARA will fund 100% of the study costs, but the funds are distributed on a competitive basis.

Consider installing ADA-compliant pedestrian gates, and/or provide some type of transit service (golf cart, van) to assist the disabled and elderly in crossing US 70, especially at cattle guard locations. The large cracks on the paved pathway should be repaired to eliminate tripping issues. Long term, if curbing is installed on the south side of US 70, consideration should be given to constructing a sidewalk on the south side of US 70.

A pedestrian overpass/underpass is also a consideration. It should be noted that this is usually a measure of last resort because they are expensive, visually intrusive, and many pedestrians will not use them if they can cross at street level in about the same amount of time it takes to use the overpass/underpass. Significant physical barriers to at grade crossing need to be imposed for these to be effective. ADOT’s Roadway Design Guidelines indicates that all six of the following criteria must be met to warrant construction of a pedestrian grade structure:

- a) High vehicular volumes conflict with high pedestrian volumes, constituting an extreme hazard
- b) Modification of school routes, busing policies, campus procedures, or attendance boundaries to eliminate the need for a crossing is not feasible
- c) Physical conditions make a grade separation structure feasible from an engineering standpoint, including pedestrian channelization to insure usage of the structure
- d) Pedestrian movements can be restricted for at least 600 feet on each side of the proposed overpass
- e) A demonstrated problem exists that simpler, more economic solutions have failed to remedy
- f) The anticipated benefits to be derived from the overpass clearly outweigh the costs



Pedestrian gate at ROW fence



Cattle guard near side street intersection with US 70

Lighting

Street lighting exists along the south side of US 70. In addition to providing illumination on US 70, the street lights also help illuminate the paved pathway on the north side of US 70. However, some of the lights are not working. Just west of the rest area, 4 consecutive lights are not working, creating a dark section along the paved pathway and US 70, making it difficult for motorists to see pedestrians crossing the road. There are 3 lights out between mileposts 294 and 295, and 1 light out between mileposts 296 and 297. These malfunctioning lights should be repaired. Also, it would be helpful if the local police could inform ADOT of lights not working by providing the pole number of the malfunctioning light.

While the street lighting provides illumination on the north side of US 70, the south side of the road is very dark, and the side road intersections are dark. Consideration should be given to installing additional lighting on the south side of US 70, particularly at the major intersections. Lighting installation has a 21% crash reduction factor (CRF) for nighttime crashes at intersections.



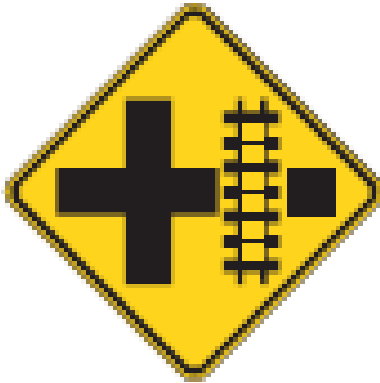
Gap in lighting created by malfunctioning street lights near the rest area

Signing

There are no street name signs for any of the side roads that intersect US 70. There is a generic “Bylas” sign for eastbound US 70, and none for westbound US 70. It is recommended that street name signs be installed for all side street intersections along US 70, and consideration given to installing advance street name signs for the major intersections. This will provide unfamiliar drivers with advance information that can reduce/eliminate erratic maneuvers approaching these intersections. Also, consider installing large gateway signing at the eastbound and westbound entrances to the community. This will provide motorists with visual cues that they are entering a community and to be aware of pedestrians, bicyclists, and turning traffic. Make sure this gateway signing is outside the clear zone and/or breakaway.

Due to the short distance between the railroad tracks and US 70, W10-2 or W10-3 warning signs should be installed along US 70 at the intersection approaches where the distance between the tracks and US 70 is less than 100 feet. This will provide drivers turning onto the side streets with adequate advance warning of the railroad crossing.

The Emergency Services sign on US 70 is small and difficult to read, and ought to specifically refer to the “Health Center”. The Police Department building is difficult to see from US 70, and there is no sign for it. In addition to the Emergency Services sign, Health Center and Police Department signs should be considered for installation in both directions along US 70.



W10-3 sign



Sign along US 70 for Health Center

Intersections

Observations of the side street intersections showed that a few of these intersections had relatively high turning movement volumes, e.g. the Health Center, the road adjacent to the Lighthouse Assembly of God Church, and the “Home Alone” subdivision. Some of the side roads south of US 70 had automatic gate systems at the railroad crossings. It is recommended that left-turn lanes be provided on US 70 at major intersections. In addition to removing slowing traffic from the through lanes, these turn lanes will also provide visual cues to motorists that they are driving through a community. Right-turn lanes can introduce sight obstructions for drivers on the side road, especially if a large vehicle is in the right-turn lane. If right-turn lanes are considered for installation, they should be offset an appropriate distance from the adjacent through lane to provide adequate intersection sight distance. It should be noted that the culvert and guardrail at the “Home Alone” intersection will add to the cost of widening for turn lanes at this location.

A three-lane section (with continuous two-way left-turn lane) should be considered for US 70, particularly from the Health Center to the Mt. Turnbull Market. In addition to separating turning traffic from through traffic, a three-lane section also gives drivers a visual cue that they are passing through an area with intersections and therefore an area with turning vehicles and pedestrians.

Consideration should be given to installing automatic railroad gate systems at all major side road railroad crossings

Transit Operations

The RSA Team observed several people standing near the vendor area, just west of the Mt. Turnbull Market, waiting for the bus to the Apache Gold Casino. Some were sitting on the light pedestals in the hot sun, while others were leaning against the vendor building taking advantage of the little bit of shade provided by the building. This area is also the location for other transit services in the community. Bus shelters should be considered for transit users. Also, ensure that the transit operates on well-defined routes and schedules, with proper signage at transit stops, to provide for rider safety. Adjust stop locations to provide service to people on the residence side of US 70 to eliminate the need for these transit users to cross US 70.

Maintenance

Vegetation growing along US 70 creates sight obstructions at some intersections. There are also edge drop-offs near some intersections, probably created by vehicles pulling off of US 70 in advance of the intersections. ADOT Safford District maintenance forces began addressing the vegetation growth while the RSA Team was still conducting its field reviews. The unpaved shoulders require some maintenance, and consideration should be given to using a more durable material, like millings, to withstand the repeated traffic loads.



Vegetation limits sight distance along US 70



Edge drop-off along US 70

Enforcement and Education

Traffic safety issues cannot be solved with engineering solutions alone; there are also enforcement and education components. The Tribe should consider enacting a primary seat belt law and a child booster seat law. The Navajo Nation recently passed a booster seat law that could provide language for the San Carlos Apache Tribe if they decide to pursue this recommendation. Even though the State of Arizona does not have a primary seat belt law, several tribes in Arizona do have primary seat belt laws, which is very commendable.

The SCPD has only one officer per shift in Bylas. It is recommended that a second officer be added to each shift, which should improve speed enforcement on US 70. In addition, it is recommended that DPS coverage of US 70 from Safford be increased.

The Tribe should seek opportunities to promote the walking path through various agencies, including Chronic Diseases, Health Center, and Diabetes. In addition to the safety benefit of separating pedestrians from the US 70 traffic, the pathway provides health and social benefits. Local newspapers could be used to promote the health benefits of using the path and to promote pedestrian safety. Consider organizing a community safety group to identify and address safety issues in the area. Use juveniles and other groups for community service projects to help improve safety (e.g. vegetation and litter removal from the pathway). Additionally, PARA funds could be requested to develop a transportation component of the Community Master Plan that could address pedestrian connectivity, ADA issues, and safety for both motorized and nonmotorized travel. If a PARA study is conducted, recommendations from this RSA should be considered for inclusion in that report.

Future Development

A new planned community with a new school is being designed for development south of US 70, east of the Mt. Turnbull Market. The Tribe should obtain traffic engineering expertise in planning for the new school circulation and parking and for the community access onto US 70. A potential connection of this new development to US 70 east of the Mt. Turnbull Market presents an opportunity to relocate the major intersection for the community away from the Market driveway to a safer location for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. This new intersection could be a more reasonable location for a traffic signal than the Market driveway, and it could provide a gateway to the community. Also, consideration could be given to closing the Rainbow City connection to US 70, forcing most of the vehicular traffic to the new intersection, which would enhance the need for a traffic signal at this new intersection. With this option, the Rainbow City connection to US 70 could be reconfigured for pedestrians only.

Crash Data

Crash data in the ADOT-maintained database and the San Carlos Apache Tribe Police Department crash data did not match. According to ADOT's data, 19 crashes occurred during the most recent 10-year period (1999 to 2008) on US 70 between mileposts 294 and 298; four crashes occurred here during the most recent 5-year period (2004 to 2008). The SCPD reported that 46 crashes occurred during the most recent 5-year period (2004 to 2008) between those mileposts on US 70. Apparently, most crashes in Bylas are not being reported to ADOT's statewide crash database. The Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) requires accurate and complete crash data for identifying and funding high crash locations. Crash experience is also a factor that can be used in determining appropriate speed limits.

In Arizona, Native Americans make up 5 percent of the state's population and 15 percent of the state's roadway fatalities. Ultimately, good crash data can be used to save San Carlos Apache Tribe member lives. It is recommended that the SCPD submit all crash reports to ADOT.

Preliminary Findings Meeting: The RSA Team presented its preliminary findings to the ADOT Safford District and the San Carlos Apache Tribe Planning personnel September 17 from 9:00 to 11:30 AM at the Albert Goseyun Memorial Exhibit Hall in Bylas. In addition to the RSA Team, participants included Bill Harmon, ADOT Safford District, Barney Bigman and Stephanie Titla, San Carlos Apache Tribe Transportation, Jerry James, San Carlos Police Department, Kenny Hicks and Tim Shelhamer, Indian Health Services, Paul Buck, San Carlos Apache Tribe Soil and Moisture Conservation Program, and Joe Carter, Strategic Issues Management Group (SIMG). Observations for improvements and countermeasures were discussed during this meeting.

Opportunities for Improvement and Countermeasures: The following table summarizes the RSA Team's observations of opportunities to improve safety with related countermeasures. These are suggested countermeasures for consideration; the road owner may also identify other effective alternate countermeasures.

SAFETY ISSUE	COUNTERMEASURES FOR CONSIDERATION
Mt. Turnbull Market Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install curb on north side of US 70 from east side of Market to Bylas Rest Area • The east access to the Market should be closed. The standard width of a commercial driveway is only 40 feet. If not closed, consider making this access an entrance only • Install a pedestrian path or sidewalk through the Market/Post Office circulation areas to connect existing paved path and to better define the pedestrian way. This path should be concrete to distinguish it from the paved parking/circulation area • The proposed incubator internal circulation should be addressed for both vehicles and pedestrians. There may be a need for a defined pedestrian path between the incubator amphitheater and the Mt. Turnbull Market • If the Market east driveway is used for access to the new offices/post office development, the access width should be narrowed to no more than 40 feet, it should be entrance only, and the existing westbound right-turn lane should be extended further to the east to provide adequate deceleration distance • Re-align the intersection of the Market driveway and Centerpoint Entrance to remove the through lane offset
Pedestrians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An evaluation of the appropriateness of the current 50 mph speed limit should be conducted, considering additional factors such as roadside development, pedestrian activity, and crash experience • Install additional pedestrian crossing warning signs, with flashing lights, for both eastbound and westbound directions, particularly in the Market/Post Office and Health Center areas • Consider eliminating the passing zones through Bylas (located at mileposts 294.6 to 295.5 and 296.5 to 297.6) • A study should be conducted to evaluate where and how many pedestrians are crossing US 70, and to determine if any pedestrian gates can be eliminated to reduce the number of pedestrian crossing locations (ADOT's PARA funds can be used for this type of study) • Consider installing ADA-compliant pedestrian gates, and/or provide some type of transit service (golf cart, van) to assist the disabled and elderly in crossing US 70, especially at cattle guard locations • Repair large cracks on the paved pathway • Long term, if curbing is installed on the south side of US 70, consideration should be given to constructing a paved pedestrian path on south side of US 70
Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair malfunctioning street lights: 4 consecutive lights just west of the rest area, 3 lights between mileposts 294 and 295, and 1 light between mileposts 296 and 297 • Request local police to inform ADOT of lights not working by providing pole number of the malfunctioning light (ADOT phone: 928-432-4912, email: tengel@azdot.gov) • Install additional lighting on the south side of US 70, particularly at the major intersections

SAFETY ISSUE	COUNTERMEASURES FOR CONSIDERATION
Signing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install street name signs for all side street intersections along US 70 • Install advance street name signs for the major intersections • Install large gateway signing at the eastbound and westbound entrances to the community • Install W10-2 or W10-3 rail grade crossing advance warning signs on US 70 at intersection approaches where tracks are less than 100 feet from US 70 • Consider installing Health Center and Police Department signs in both directions along US 70
Intersections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install left-turn lanes on US 70 at major intersections; if right-turn lanes are installed, they should be offset from the adjacent through lanes • Long term, a continuous two-way left-turn lane should be considered for US 70, particularly from the Health Center to the Mt. Turnbull Market • Install automatic gate systems at all major side road railroad crossings
Transit Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus shelters should be provided for transit users • Ensure that transit operates on well-defined routes and schedules, with proper signage at transit stops, to provide for rider safety • Provide service to people living on the residence side of US 70 (south side)
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to address the vegetation growth along US 70 • Unpaved shoulders require some maintenance, and consideration should be given to using a more durable material, like millings, to withstand the repeated traffic loads
Enforcement and Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tribe should consider enacting primary seat belt law and child booster seat law • Tribe should pursue adding a second officer to each shift • Tribe should request additional DPS coverage from Safford for US 70 • Tribe should seek opportunities to promote the walking path through various agencies, including Chronic Diseases, Health Center, and Diabetes • Use local newspapers to promote the path and to promote pedestrian safety • Tribe should consider organizing a community safety group to identify and address safety issues in the area • Consider using juveniles and other groups for community service projects to help improve safety (e.g. vegetation and litter removal from the pathway) • Request PARA funds to develop transportation component of Community Master Plan to address pedestrian connectivity, ADA issues, and safety for all road users; include RSA recommendations in PARA report
Future Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tribe should obtain traffic engineering expertise in planning for the new school circulation and parking and for the community access onto US 70 • Tribe should pursue a potential connection of this new development to US 70 east of the Mt. Turnbull Market • With this new connection, consideration should be given to closing the Rainbow City connection to US 70. With this option, the Rainbow City connection to US 70 could be reconfigured for pedestrians only.
Crash Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCPD should submit crash reports for all crashes to ADOT