

RTIP#: RIV000103

PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED SUMMARY

1.1 PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of the proposed Belardo Road Bridge and Roadway Project, as originally stated in the project purpose and benefit statement in the Public Lands Highways Discretionary Program application is:

- to provide regional roadway access to the Tribal Interpretive Center and Tahquitz Creek Scenic Park, and
- to generate economic development of the surrounding Tribal lands.

The following section explains the existing deficiencies that result in this project purpose.

1.2 PROJECT NEED

Belardo Road is a non-continuous roadway between Tahquitz Canyon Way and South Palm Canyon Drive. Because there is no bridge over Tahquitz Creek, no roadway between Sunny Dunes Road and Mesquite Avenue, and there are missing improvements between Mesquite Avenue and Morongo Avenue, Belardo Road does not function as the Secondary Roadway designated in the City of Palm Springs General Plan. This restricts access to and development of lands along Belardo Road.

1.2.1 ACCESS

The Tahquitz Canyon Historic Area is located on Tribal lands in the southwest portion of Palm Springs and includes the Tahquitz Creek Scenic Area. The Tribal Interpretive Center, located in the Tahquitz Creek Scenic Area, is a visitors center for Tahquitz Canyon that is operated by the Tribe, and has facilities for picnicking, hiking, and horseback riding. Currently, the Tribal Interpretive Center at Tahquitz Creek has one access road, which is at the western end of Mesquite Avenue, requiring visitors to use South Palm Canyon Drive and Mesquite Avenue to access the Tribal Interpretive Center. A second access point is necessary.

1.2.2 SAFETY AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

The gap in Belardo Road forces all traffic traveling on Belardo Road to divert to South Palm Canyon Drive between Sunny Dunes Road and either Mesquite Avenue or Morongo Road (depending on origin/destination). The majority of this traffic must turn at South Palm Canyon Drive. High-turning movements often result in high accident rates. The South Palm Canyon Drive/Mesquite Avenue intersection has the City's 10th-highest accident rate, with an average of five accidents per year and 0.052 accidents per million vehicles.

The gap in Belardo Road and the single access point to the Tribal Interpretive Center mean that emergency response to the adjoining lands and, especially to the Tribal

Interpretive Center, is less direct. The existing single access road would compromise emergency response if an accident or natural disaster were to block Mesquite Avenue or the entrance road at its west end. In addition, access to the area west of South Palm Canyon Drive could be difficult if an accident or natural disaster were to affect the South Palm Canyon Drive bridge over Tahquitz Creek.

1.2.3 CONSTRAINTS ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The current gap in Belardo Road impedes the free movement of tourists and visitors between some of these attractions, especially the local hotels and the Tribal Interpretive Center. This gap forces traffic onto South Palm Canyon Drive, isolating the area to the southwest from the downtown area. There are very visible physical and economic differences between the two areas. Downtown Palm Springs received over \$40 million in private investments between 1996 and 2001, while the South Palm Canyon area gained only one new building and some minor building rehabilitation during the same period. Improving the Belardo Road gap could benefit economic development of the South Palm Canyon area.

