Technical Memorandum



DATE: March 16, 2024
TO: Greg Clarke, PE
FROM: Jim Buckman, PE

SUBJECT: Coors/St. Josephs Intersection Review CC: Nancy Perea, PE; Margaret Haynes, PE

Introduction

Parametrix reviewed the preliminary design of improvements to the NM 45 (Coors Boulevard) and St. Josephs Drive intersection in Albuquerque. The project will include improvements to the Coors/St. Josephs intersection and to St. Josephs Drive from Atrisco Drive to Coors. These improvements are necessary to accommodate increased traffic from proposed development west of Coors to the north and south of St. Josephs. The exhibits in the file, "24-02-02 Updated Roadway Exhibits.pdf" (Roadway Exhibits) by RESPEC Community Design Solutions were used for the detailed review. The design is approximately 30% complete, so not all details were available at this stage. The "Oxbow Development/Coors Pavilion (St. Josephs Dr./Coors Blvd.) Final Traffic Impact Study" (TIS), December 20, 2020, by Terry O. Brown, P.E. was also used for the analysis. The review focused on the improvements that would affect NMDOT facilities and traffic along Coors.

Coors Boulevard is a pedestrian-involved high crash corridor, and NMDOT has identified it as a "corridor in most need of improvement." St. Pius X High School is at the northeast corner of the Coors/St. Josephs intersection, and students frequently use the intersection crosswalks. The review objective was to check elements of the proposed design for conformance with NMDOT standards and policies. Elements included the roadway geometry, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and traffic signals. The review was done in two phases. First, the proposed plan exhibits and TIS were reviewed. Second, opportunities for additional safety improvements were analyzed.

Design Review

The following documents were referenced during the review.

- A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), 7th Edition, 2018.
- Urban Street Design Guide by the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), 2013.
- State Access Management Manual (SAMM) by the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department, 2001.
- Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices by the Federal Highway Administration, 11th Edition, 2023.
- Guide for the Planning, Operation, and Design of Pedestrian Facilities by AASHTO, 2nd Edition, December 2021.
- New Mexico Department of Transportation Design Manual, March 2020, Revision 1.
- NMDOT Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment, November 6, 2023.



Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines by the U.S. Access Board, https://www.access-board.gov/prowag/

- Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities by AASHTO, Fourth Edition, 2012.
- NMDOT Pedestrian Safety Action Plan, August 2021.
- Crash Modification Factors Clearinghouse by the Federal Highway Administration, https://www.cmfclearinghouse.org/

The criteria considered during this review are numbered in the attached checklist. These were grouped by intersection geometry, pedestrian facilities, and bicycle facilities. Where the proposed design appears to differ from the review criteria, comment key notes are shown with blue circles on the Roadway Exhibits.

While traffic signal improvements are not detailed in the preliminary plans, potential impacts to the existing signals were considered.

Safety Options

Because safety for multi-modal users is a key concern at this intersection, Parametrix considered several design options. The *Urban Street Design Guide* states:

"Redesigning major intersections requires designers to critically evaluate the tools and trade-offs available to make an intersection work better for everyone. While shorter cycle lengths, compact design, and pedestrian safety islands are all desirable components of a multi-modal intersection, the tradeoffs inherent in each make these difficult to achieve simultaneously. Weigh intersection geometry, signal timing, and traffic volumes to formulate a design that clarifies the hierarchy of street users, while enhancing the safety and legibility of the intersection." (Page 94)

Several options are discussed below, along with their pros and cons. The options are conceptual, and further investigation would be needed before final recommendations are made. To illustrate some of the options, a conceptual plan and typical cross sections are attached. The conceptual layout assumes widening on both sides of Coors. This is per NMDOT standard practice, and it was helpful in identifying potential constraints and impacts. Note the preliminary design holds the existing curb on the east side of Coors. Other innovative design options also may be considered.

1. Reduce St. Josephs proposed eastbound to northbound left-turn lanes from triple to dual lefts

Pros

- > Eliminating the third left would allow for a median refuge on the west leg, improving safety and comfort for pedestrians. Also, the wider medians should increase traffic calming.
- > Reduces the number of potential conflict points and improves visibility of pedestrians in and near the crosswalks.
- Reduces the possibility of larger turning vehicles encroaching on the adjacent lanes, which could result in sideswipe crashes.
- Improves sight distance for opposing westbound traffic.
- Provides flexibility for the dual lefts to have protected-permissive signal phasing, compared to the triple lefts that would always require a protected phase.
- > The proposed third left turn lane does not provide adequate storage length. Traffic that queues past the third lane is less likely to fully utilize the theoretical lane capacity.

Eliminates back-to-back lefts with the next intersection to the west of Coors. Eliminating the third left could allow for future extension of the westbound to southbound left turn lane at the next intersection without major changes to the Coors intersection. If this left-turn lane could be extended by shortening the eastbound inside left lane at Coors, it could cause traffic to back up into the Coors intersection.

- > Triple lefts are uncommon and may not meet driver expectations. Most existing instances of triple lefts have longer radius, lower angle turns (I-25/US-550, I-40/Louisiana, Coors Blvd./Coors Bypass), and opposing traffic is limited.
- > Few safety studies for triple lefts are available.
- Preliminary analysis by Parametrix shows the intersection with dual lefts would function similarly to triple lefts if the signal is phased so the left turns lag the eastbound through movement.

Cons

- > Eliminating the third left lane may increase backups during peak periods, particularly if a lagging left turn phase is not used.
- > Backups at Coors may increase the likelihood of traffic diverting around the intersection.
- > Because the proposed lane geometry limits the ability to narrow the width of the St. Josephs roadway, the pedestrian access route and crosswalk lengths would remain essentially the same.

2. Reduce proposed Coors southbound to eastbound left-turn lanes from dual lefts to a single left

Reconstruct the Coors median north of St. Josephs to provide a single left-turn lane instead of dual lefts. If providing wider medians on Coors is impractical due to site constraints or other concerns, this would at least allow space for a median refuge on the north leg of the intersection. Note the existing message board sign north of the intersection may limit the practical length of the left turn lanes.

Pros

- > Eliminating the second left would allow for a median refuge on the north leg, improving safety and comfort for pedestrians. Also, the wider median should increase traffic calming effects.
- > Eliminating the second left reduces the number of potential conflict points and improves visibility of pedestrians in and near the crosswalks.
- Preliminary traffic analysis by Parametrix shows the storage length for a single left would be 575', which is close to the proposed storage length of 547'. Note the proposed lane would be slightly shorter if the reverse curve radii required by the SAMM are used (600'/300'), but a single left would require a shorter transition.
- > The single left would operate similarly to existing conditions, and there have not been many complaints of traffic backups at this location reported.
- Reducing the southbound left-turn lanes would reduce or eliminate the need to widen St. Josephs eastbound to accommodate the proposed bike lane.
- > Provides flexibility for the southbound to eastbound left turn to operate as permissive more of the time, improving operations.

Cons

> School traffic volumes may be more condensed than assumed by the traffic model. This could lead to traffic backups, increased delays, driver frustration, and reduced safety.

- > St. Pius is reportedly adding 6th and 7th grades, so traffic may increase more than anticipated, increasing backups.
- Sight distance for the single left could be limited by the intersection geometry with the northbound dual lefts. This could eliminate the signal phasing option of permissive lefts.

3. Build pedestrian crosswalk median refuges on Coors

Widen the roadway slightly to provide median refuge on the north and south legs of the intersection.

Pros

- > Pedestrian refuge islands limit pedestrian exposure in the intersection, improving safety and comfort for users.
- Proven safety countermeasure.

Cons

- Overhead and underground utilities run along both sides of Coors in the area. The utility poles along the west side north of St. Josephs could conflict with the proposed sidewalk. Underground utilities would need further investigation.
- > Additional removal and replacement of existing curb and gutter, sidewalk, and landscaping would be required.

4. Eliminate existing free right-turns and tighten intersection curb radii

Extend curbs on the east leg to eliminate free right-turns, with curb radii of 10' to 15' +/-. At the northwest corner, provide a 40' +/- radius for semi-truck access. At the southwest corner, provide a 25' radius.

Note the 15' radius at the southeast corner was in part to help avoid impacts to the existing traffic signal. Semi-trucks making the northbound to eastbound right-turn could encroach into the Coors outside through lane to make the turn. St. Josephs east of Coors serves the high school and residential neighborhoods, so the truck turning volume is expected to be negligible, but it would need to be investigated further.

Pros

- Eliminating free rights and tightening radii would slow down traffic at the pedestrian crossings, improve pedestrian visibility, and reduce the number of potential conflict points.
- > Smaller radii shorten overall crossing lengths and would reduce the number of pedestrian decision points, decreasing pedestrian exposure risk and improving safety.
- Improves pedestrian ramp alignment and expands pedestrian-use areas within the intersection.
- > Westbound to northbound right-turn volumes are low enough (134 AM/54 PM) that it would not affect traffic operations.
- > Large vehicles are still able to turn by using the available roadway width.
- > Allows space for perpendicular curb ramps, improving crossing alignment for visually impaired pedestrians.

- Potential use of overlapping right-turn signal phases to increase capacity of right turns on red.
- > Eliminates the existing entrance from westbound St. Josephs to northbound Coors, which is too short to allow vehicles to adequately accelerate and merge with traffic.

Cons

- > Potential added delays for right-turning vehicles.
- > Tight radius at the southeast corner could require large trucks to encroach into the thru lane to make the turn, though the demand for this maneuver has not been determined.

Other Recommendations

Lane Widths

The preliminary design shows lane widths on Coors being reduced from 12' to 11'. This is a proven safety measure and should be retained in the proposed design.

Bicycle Facilities

The City of Albuquerque Interactive Bike and Multi-Use Trail Map, https://www.cabq.gov/municipaldevelopment/maps/interactive-bike-map, includes existing and proposed bicycle facilities. The City is currently updating the Map. The proposed Map is not expected to show facilities along Coors south of St. Josephs, because bikes will be able to turn east or west at the intersection to access parallel north-south facilities on both sides of Coors. Southbound bikes still would have the option of crossing the intersection and turning east on St. Josephs. Therefore, the bike lane width should be retained on the south side of the intersection, so bikes are not forced

Currently there is a gap in bicycle facilities at the Coors/St. Josephs intersection, with an existing buffered lane to the west of Coors and a paved trail to the east. The proposed design provides bike lanes west of Coors, but nothing is shown on the east leg. Since traffic volumes are low in that area, there may be an opportunity to reduce St. Josephs east of Coors to one vehicle lane with a bike lane in each direction.

Traffic Signal Improvements

to merge into the traffic lane.

Existing traffic signal poles and mastarms will be impacted by the proposed roadway improvements. Design details were not available in the preliminary plans, but it appears the mastarms on the west side of the intersection would need to be relocated due to the widening of St. Josephs. For mastarms that are to be relocated, the use of longer arms should be considered. This would eliminate the need for Type 1 poles in the medians, which are prone to being hit by errant vehicles.

The signal head for the St. Josephs eastbound left turn lane, which is currently located on a Type 1 pole in the east leg median, would be over 180' away from the new stop bar. Per the MUTCD, this would require the use of a near side signal head for the left turn movement. Alternatively, a mastarm with a longer arm could be installed to house the indications for the left turn phase.

Lighting Relocations

Adequate lighting is vital to pedestrian safety. Existing lighting will be impacted by the proposed roadway widening. Relocation of light standards and new standards, if needed, must be incorporated into the proposed design.

Pedestrian Fencing

Consider installing pedestrian fencing along the median to redirect pedestrians to the intersection crosswalks. This is a proven countermeasure to reduce crashes. Note the proposed fence would need to be designed to minimize risks to errant vehicles during impact, such as the risk of horizontal rails detaching and penetrating the vehicle compartment.

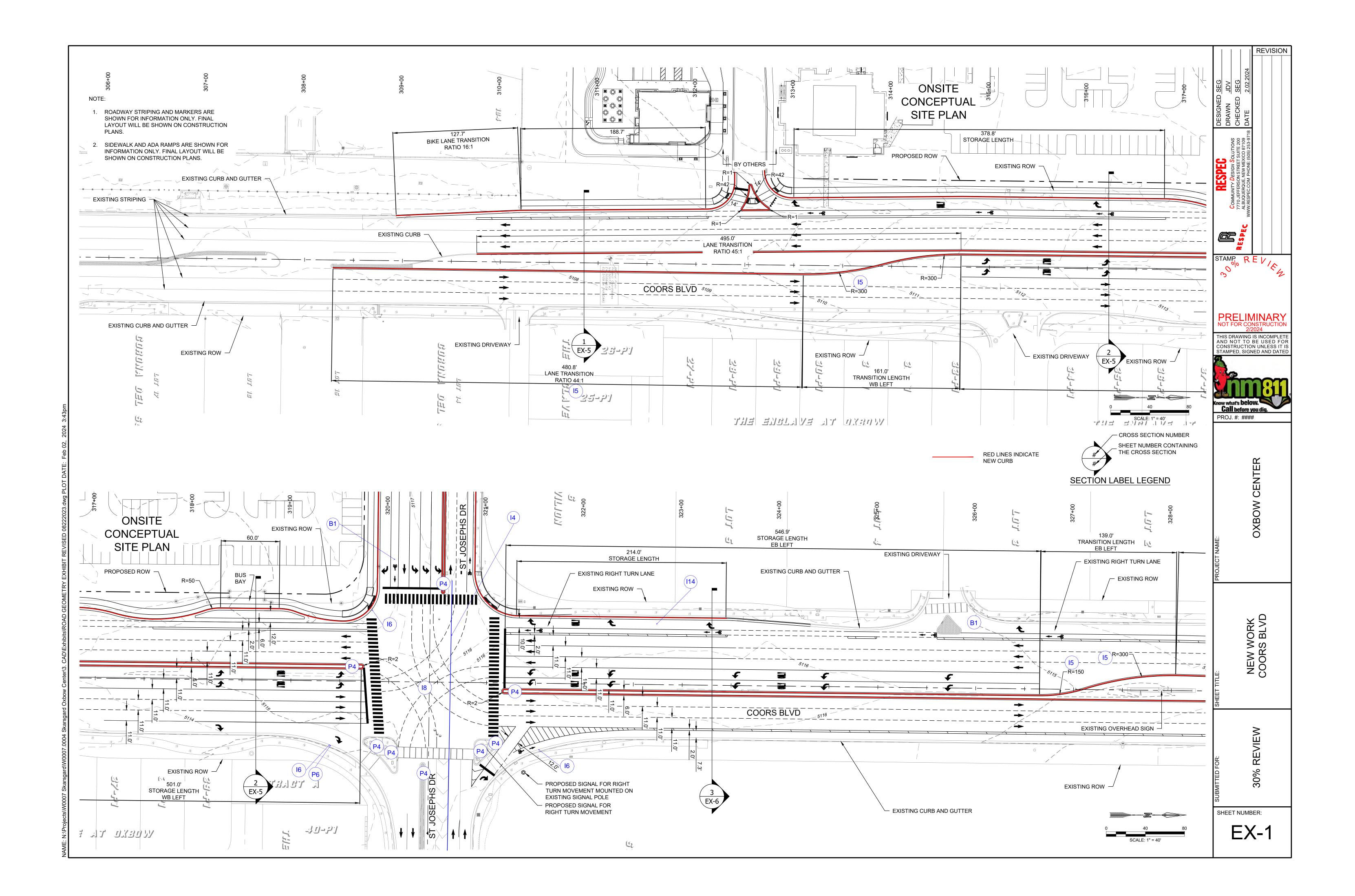
Attachments

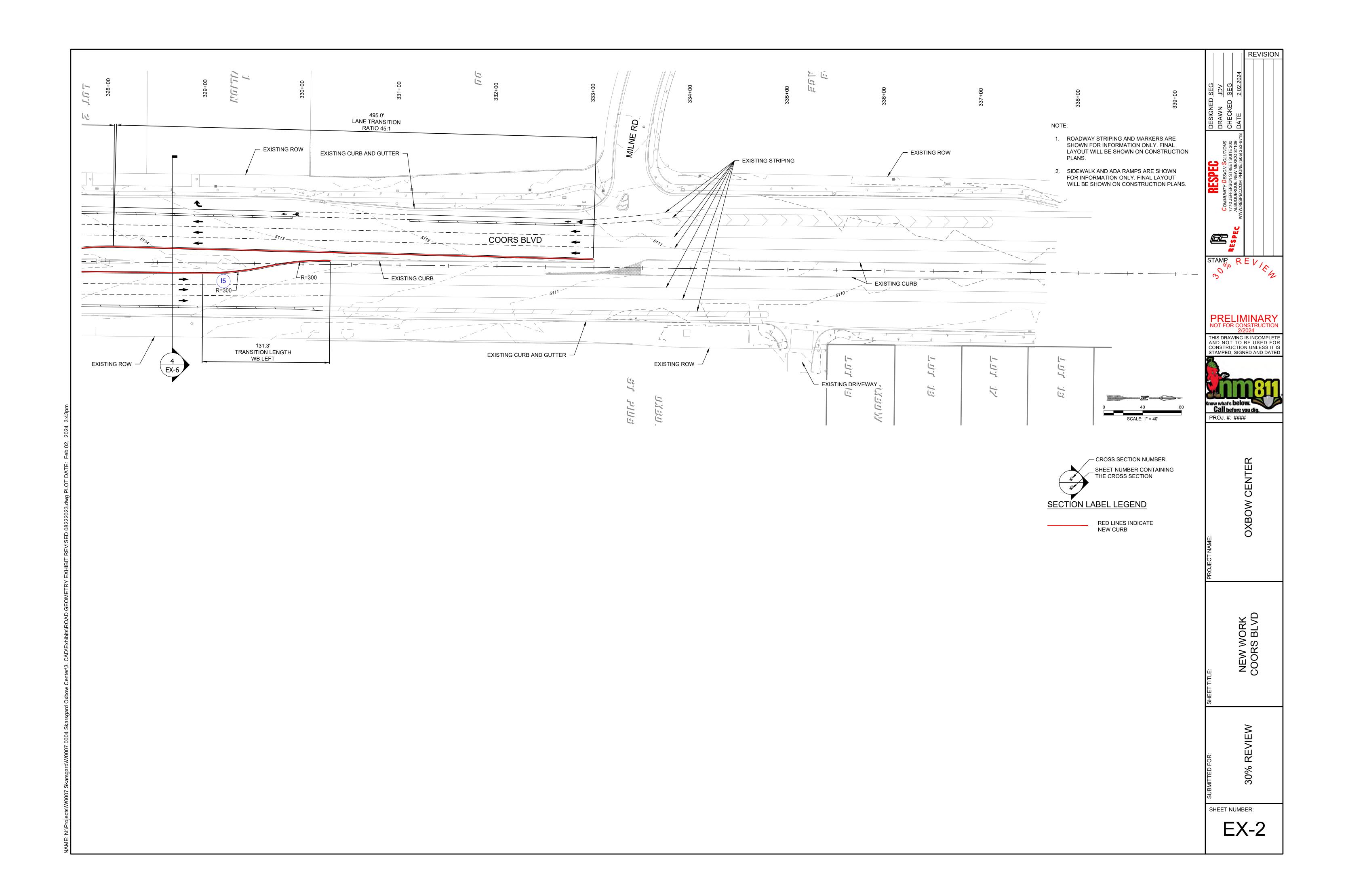
Roadway Exhibits with review comments

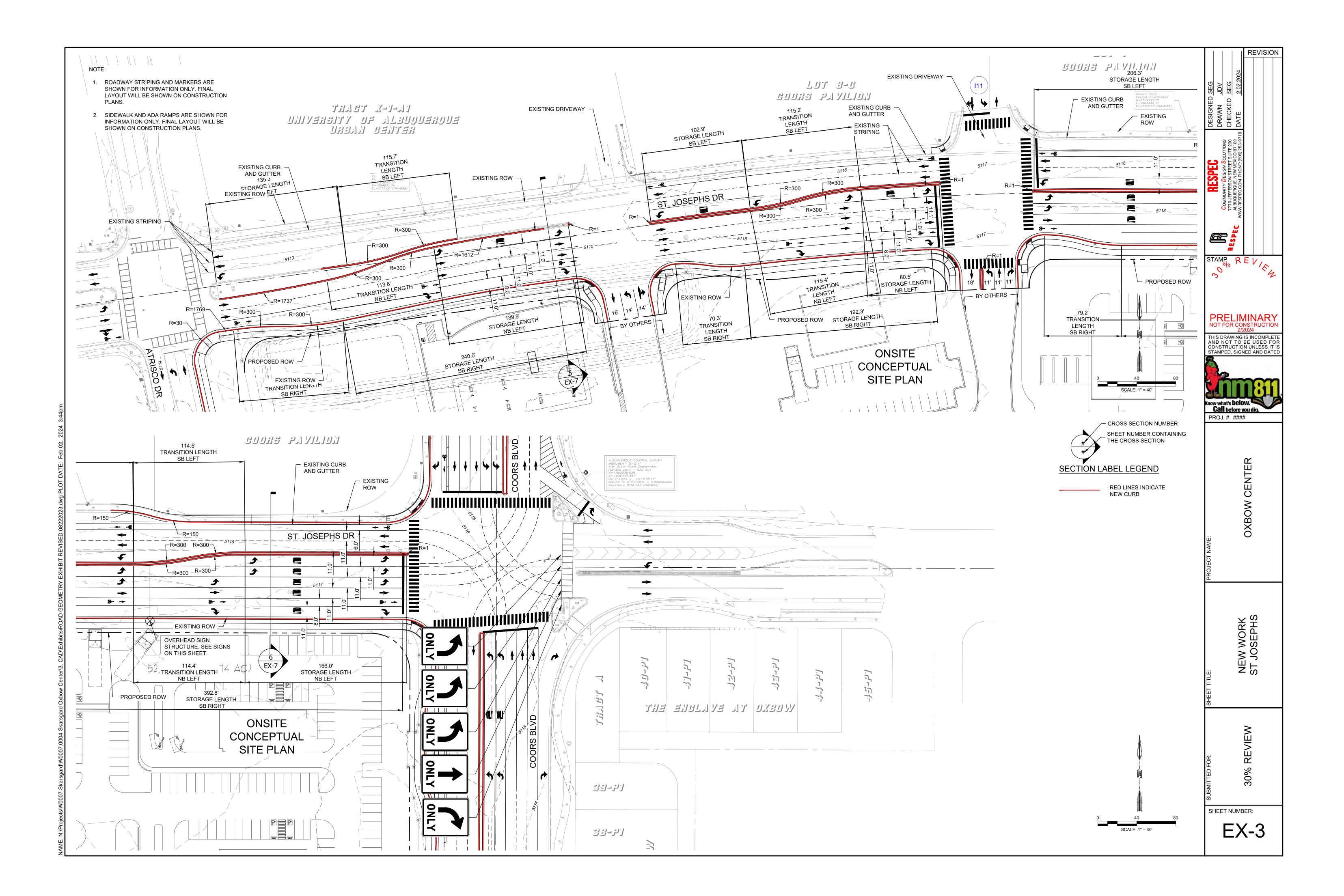
Plan review checklist

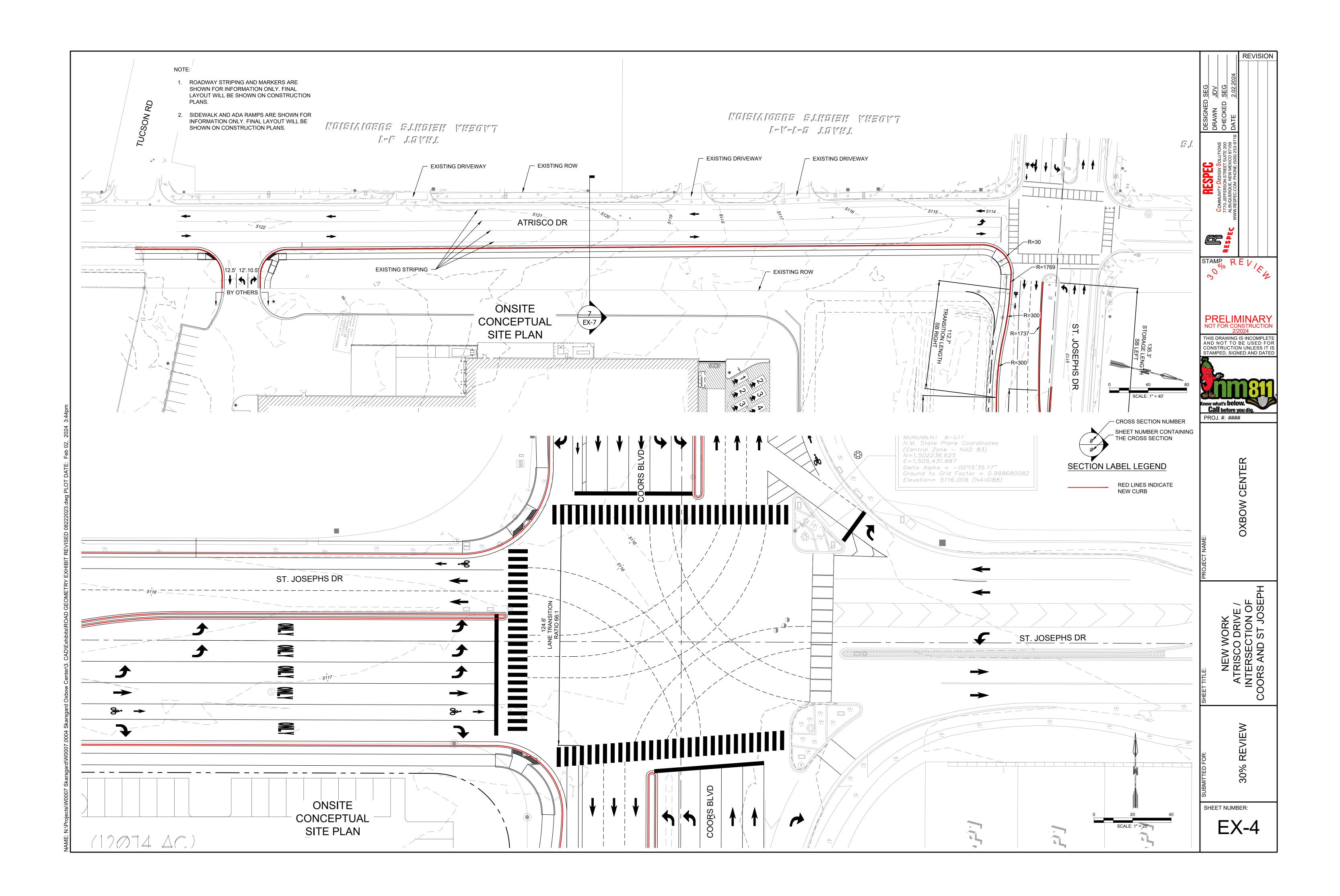
Proposed 30% design plotted on 2020 aerials

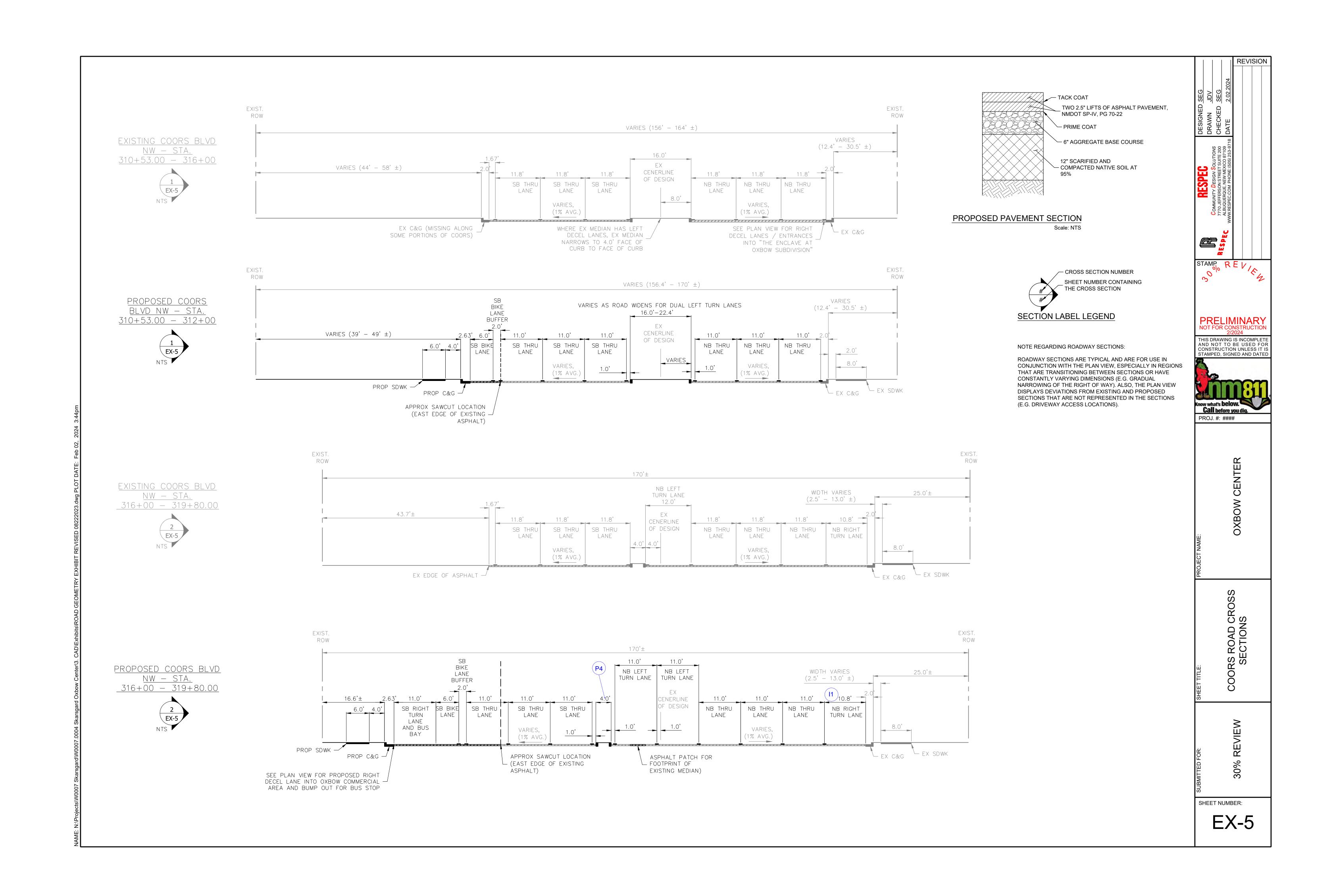
Intersection concept plan and typical sections

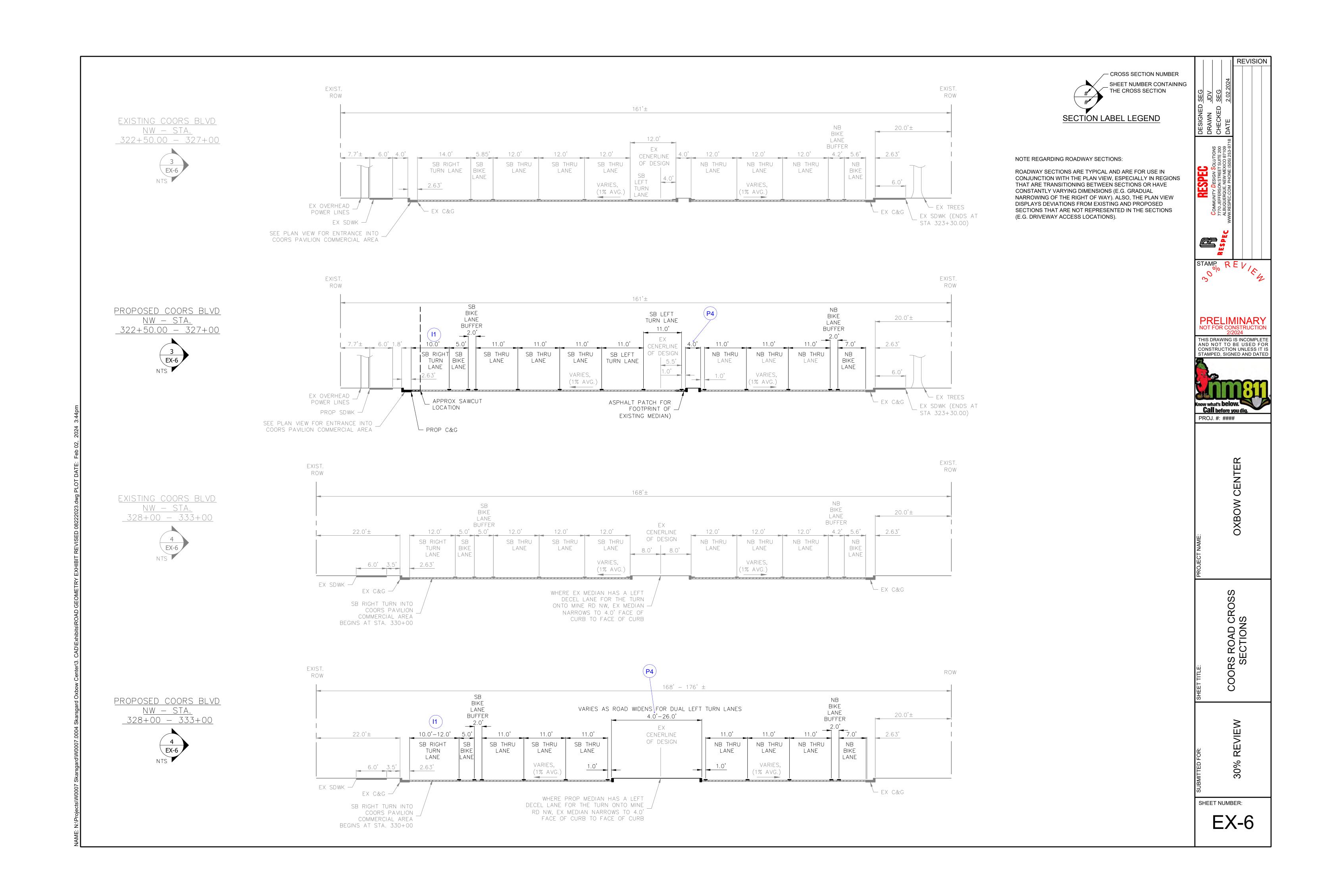


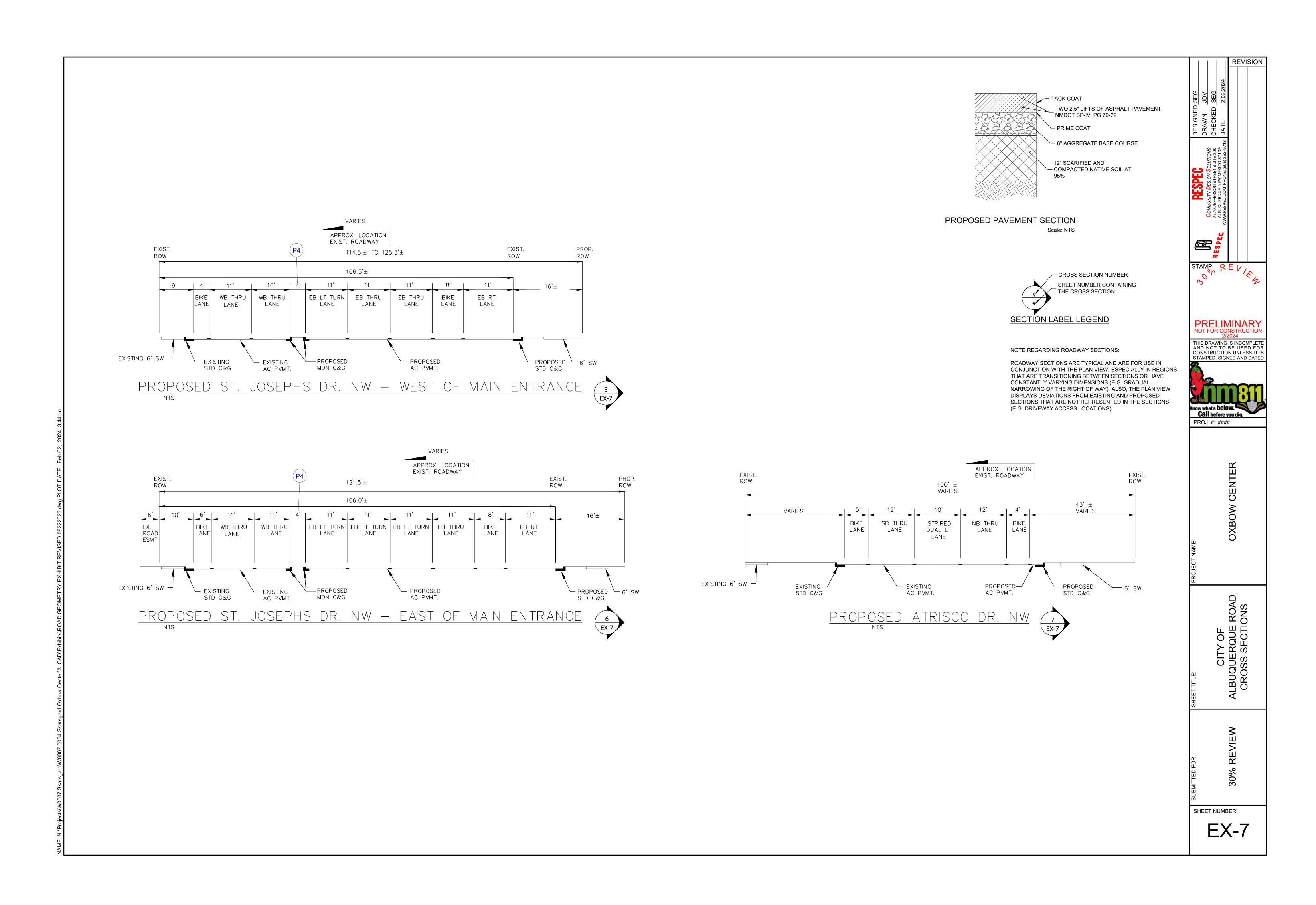












Coors/St Josephs Intersection Review Plan Review Checklist

Roadway classification

Posted speed

General Information

Coors: Regional Principal Arterial St. Josephs W. of Coors: Minor Arterial

E. of Coors: Local

45 mph

N, S, W legs: WB-62

Design vehicle E leg: WB-50, also check S-Bus-36

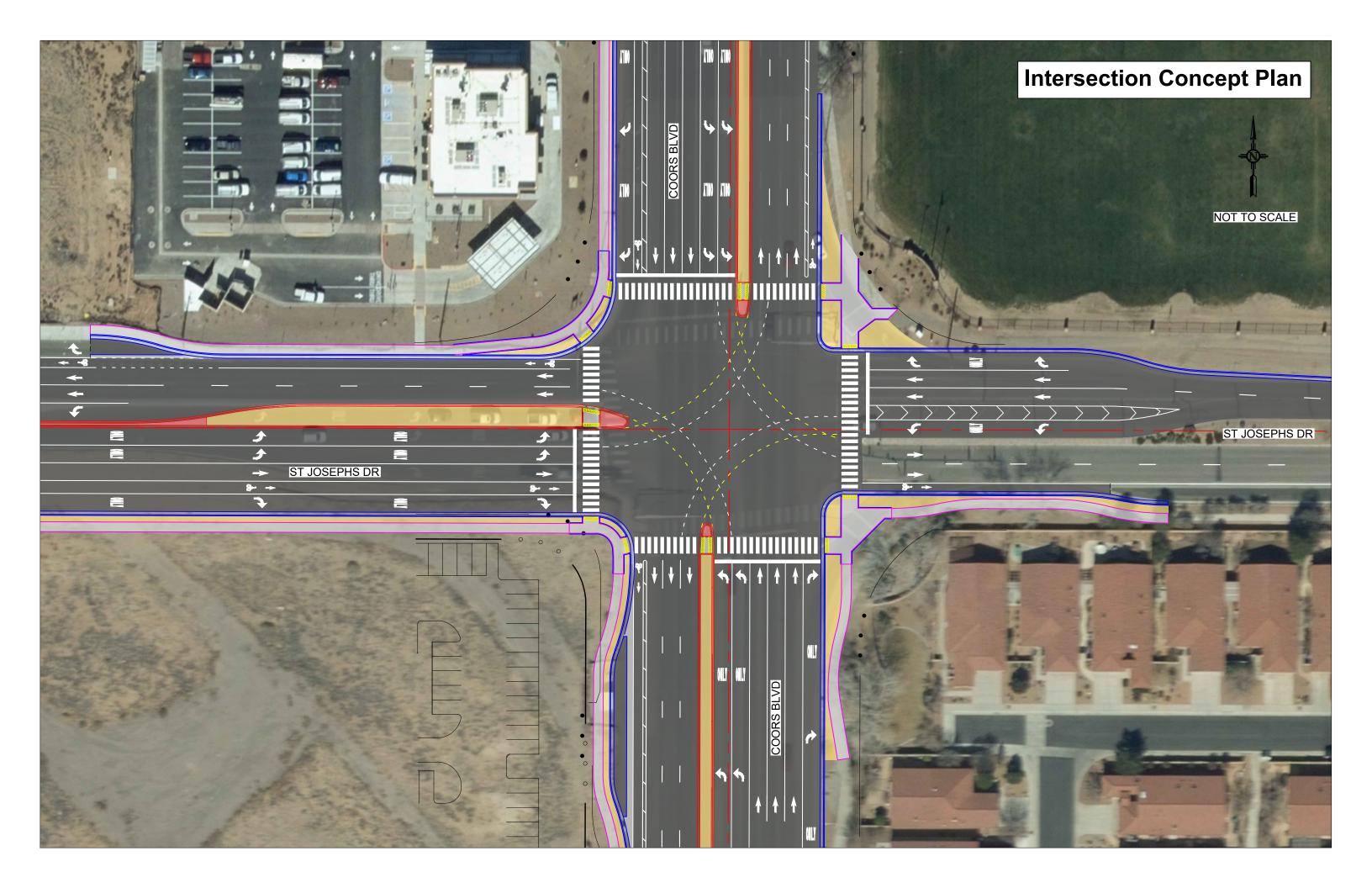
MRMPO Long Range Roadway System (https://mrmpo.maps.arcgis.com/apps/weba ppviewer/index.html?id=9d3876c8b09f4e22 aacd3e900892c381)

Comment							
Key Notes	Description	Criteria	Source	Comments			
Intersection Geometry Intersection Geometry							
		Coors: 11'-12'		Coors SB right-turn lane does not meet lane			
I1	Lane width	St. Josephs: 10' min. (speeds less than 35 mph)	AASHTO Green Book, 7.3.3.2	width requirement.			
		May be desirable on high-speed roadway (check for					
		consistency with corridor)					
12	Shoulders	Width = 8'	AASHTO Green Book, 7.3.3.3, Table 7-3				
		Vertical curb not recommended along high-speed					
		arterials. However, vertical curbs have safety benefits for	•				
13	Curb	pedestrians and are consistent with the existing corridor.	AASHTO Green Book, 4.7.3				
			NACTO, Major Intersections,	St Josephs WB lanes do not align across			
14	Lanes aligned across intersection	Minimize offsets	Recommendations	Coors.			
				Left lane reverse curve tapers on the Coors			
		R = 300'/600' asymmetric reverse curve tapers at turn	SAMM, 18.K.1.a.i	medians do not meet criterion.			
		lanes		Tapers on the south leg are close to meeting			
15	Lane transitions	Lane shift transition ratio =45:1	MUTCD 3.B.13	criterion (44:1).			
		St. Josephs: 25'					
		Other: 15'					
		Note these are commonly used values and do not reflect					
		effective radii. Design should be checked using turning		Curb radii at intersection appear larger than			
16	Corner curb radii	templates.	AASHTO Green Book, 9.6.1.4	needed for design vehicles.			
		Single left: 75' for SU truck, bus, occasional WB-62					
17	Left-turn radii	Double or triple left: 90', 12' swept path width	AASHTO Green Book, 9.7.3.6				
				Preliminary striping for left-turn lanes are			
18	Vehicle left turn separation	10' minimum	AASHTO Green Book, 9.7.3.5	closer than 10'.			
19	Left-turn lane offset	Provide positive offset	AASHTO Green Book, 9.7.3.4				
		Appropriate for right-turn lanes. Refer to GPF for design					
110	Channelized right turn lanes	guidance.	AASHTO GPF 3.6.2.6				
		St. Josephs: 2,640' (signalized)		St. Josephs intersection spacing does not			
l11	Intersection spacing	Coors RI/RO driveways: 500'	SAMM, Table 18.C-1	meet criterion.			
l12	Stopping sight distance (SSD)	15 mph turns: 80'; also see crosswalk criteria	AASHTO 9.6.5.1				
		20'-30', 30' simple curve radius (assumes Passenger					
I13	Driveways	Car/Pickup with separate truck access)	SAMM, Table 18.I-1				

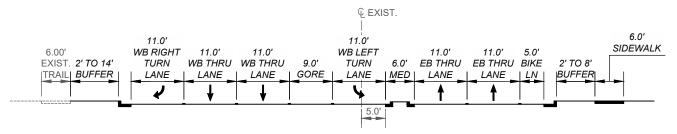
Comment				
Key Notes	Description	Criteria	Source	Comments
•		Coors: 400' (stop condition/at signal), 370' (slow to 15	004.00	
		mph/at driveways), or queue storage length, whichever		
		is greater.		Coors SB right-turn lane does not meet decel
114	Deceleration length and tapers	Tapers: 12.5 L to 1 W	SAMM, Table 18.K-1	length requirement.
Pedestrian Fo		Topolo: 1210 2 to 1 to	or willing radic folic f	iengui requirement
	Crosswalks			
P1	All legs have crosswalks	Provide crosswalks on all 4 legs	NMDOT DM 1200.10.2	
	-0-	Crosswalks should be aligned as closely as possible with	NACTO, Intersection Design Elements,	
P2	Alignment	the pedestrian through zone.	Conventional Crosswalks	
P3	Width	10' recommended	AASHTO GPF 3.6.2.3	
		Appropriate for the following conditions:		1
		• Two-way arterials with intermediate to high speeds (35		
		mph or greater), moderate to high average daily traffic		
		(9,000 AADT or higher), and high pedestrian volumes.		
		Significant pedestrian collision history, according to		
		crash data.		
		Near a school or other community center.	NMDOT DM 1200.11	
		Provide refuge when crossing distance exceeds 60';	NMDOT VRU Safety Assessment, Table 5-4;	
		width = 6' min., 8' to 10' preferred. Cut through should	AASHTO Green Book, 9.6.1.4; NACTO,	Median refuge not provided. Existing
		match width of crosswalk (10'). Nose should extend past	Intersection Design Elements, Pedestrian	channelizing island cut throughs do not
P4	Median refuge	crosswalk.	Safety Islands	match crosswalk widths.
		Diagonal ramps not permitted unless physically		
P5	Curb ramps	constrained.	NMDOT DM 1200.9.1	
		Crosswalks shall provide a pedestrian signal head, hybrid	PROWAG (https://www.access-	
P6	Channelized right turn lanes	beacon, rapid flashing beacon, or raised crossing.	board.gov/prowag/), R306.5	No mitigation shown at SE corner.
		Where crossing is not intended, separate the pedestrian		
		path from the curb, crosswalk to crosswalk with a 2'		
P7	Separation	wide buffer	PROWAG, R306.4.1.1	
	Sidewalks			
		4' to 8', 2' wider than minimum when adjacent to a curb	AASHTO Green Book 4.17.1	
P8	Width	5' or more preferred	NMDOT DM 1200.8.1	
P9	Buffers (between roadway and sidewalk)	2' min., 4' recommended	AASHTO GPF 3.3.5	
Bicycle Facili	ties			
				St Josephs EB bike lane should continue
				across Coors intersection. Existing driveway
		5' preferred, wider may be appropriate for high-speed		island on Coors SB north of St Josephs blocks
B1	Lane width	roadways	AASHTO GBF 4.6.4	bike lane.
B2	Buffers (between through and right turn lanes)	4', 5' desirable	SAMM, 18.K.5	
50		Day City Bile Tool Man	https://www.cabq.gov/municipaldevelopme	
В3	Locations	Per City Bike Trail Map	nt/maps/interactive-bike-map	



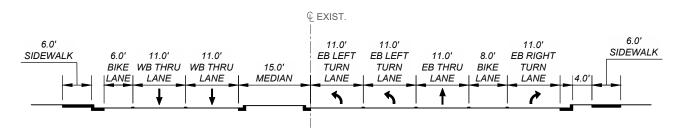




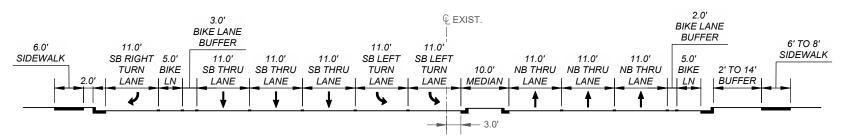
Intersection Concept Typical Sections



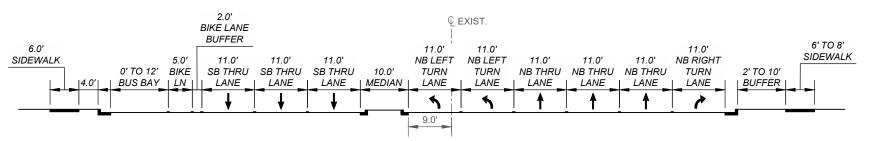
PROPOSED TYPICAL SECTION - ST. JOSEPHS DR (EAST OF INTERSECTION)



PROPOSED TYPICAL SECTION - ST. JOSEPHS DR (WEST OF INTERSECTION)



PROPOSED TYPICAL SECTION - COORS BLVD (NORTH OF INTERSECTION)



PROPOSED TYPICAL SECTION - COORS BLVD (SOUTH OF INTERSECTION)