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Willard Extension opens to cheers

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VVN/Jon Pelletier
Cottonwood Mayor Diane Joens cuts the ceremonial ribbon while city officials and project contractors look on, as the new Willard Street extension opens. Bicyclists, who lobbied aggressively for a bicycle lane, were present to take advantage of the new roadway.

Dogs, bicycles, neighbors, contractors and city officials enjoyed the warm sun in the Sedona hills from the middle of the Willard Street Extension Friday. Traffic closed at midday.

The small gathering of two to three dozen were on hand to celebrate the opening of the new road.

Public Works Director Tim Costello told the group the extension of Willard is a major connection between Old Town Cottonwood at Main Street deep into Verde Villa.

The road extension is state of the art, at least by Cottonwood's standards. It features a bicycle lane plus two full traffic lanes." The crossing of Silver Springs Wash is so close to 6th Street will be flooded when water reaches it.

He said that it is a "major transportation corridor."

Costello recalled that the connection had been a dream for former City Manager Tom Costello's transportation plan, but the proposal of two new subdivisions, one at either end of the road, had delayed the project.

It was, in fact, Cottonwood Business Park, 36 light commercial lots adjacent to the road, that would complete the connection.

The road crosses the Business Park's private land for 1,000 feet just southeast of the park.

The city finished the southernmost 2,000 feet about one month before the full opening of the road to cushion the \$1 million cost.

Mayor Diane Joens applauded the cooperative project between the city and a private developer who had already sold about a half-dozen lots including one for a Frito Lay potato chip factory.

Then she pounded home a "golden spike" (actually a brass survey-style marker) into the ground to mark the end of the road.

Ron Kohan, the principal partner in the Business Park, also hailed the partnership between the city and the private developer in building the street.

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Cottonwood Mayor Diane Joens snaps a photo of the first car (a 2005 Scion XA) to pass through the new Willard Street extension on Thursday, Feb. 19.

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