



The following questions or issues were brought forward during a recent South Mountain Citizens Advisory Team (SMCAT) meeting and were designated as “parking lot” issues because we ran out of time at the June 11, 2013, meeting. Questions submitted on the blue question cards by SMCAT members and the public that were not answered at the meeting are answered below. Each parking lot issue is addressed by presenting the question asked, followed by the Arizona Department of Transportation’s (ADOT’s) written response.

Questions submitted at the June 11, 2013, meeting

Topic	Public Question	Response
Biology and alternative modes of travel	<p>Will there be an area constructed for animals that will be displaced by the implementation of this freeway? For example, an animal highway – this decreases the amount of animal deaths and displacement.</p> <p>Is the “multiuse crossings” a type of area for animals to safely cross? If so, How?</p> <p>If we invested our monies for this project into public transportation and methods (other than destroying animal, ecological 7 significant habitats) couldn’t that be a better use of funds?</p> <p>Countries and other states have been able to use public transportation on a massive scale to alleviate the use of automobiles & save money (Brazil, Oregon, California, New York, Illinois, Europe, etc.). Air quality, health (humans & the environment) money would be benefited with the use of public transportation. These methods (public transit & Transportation) are the future and are more beneficial.</p> <p>Ariel LeBarron</p>	<p>No animal highway or similar type of facility is planned. Wildlife displaced by the proposed freeway would move to appropriate available habitat nearby.</p> <p>Multiuse crossing structures would be placed along selected washes that would serve as movement corridors for wildlife to pass beneath the freeway.</p> <p>ADOT has been interested in supporting integration of public transportation and highways. Integrating a freeway and a light rail system into a single transportation corridor is planned along Interstate 10 (Papago Freeway) and along State Route 51 (Piestewa Freeway). In addition, the proposed freeway would offer opportunities for implementing regional freeway-dependent transit services such Express and Rapid bus routes.</p> <p>Beginning on page 3-5, the Draft EIS discusses the transit alternatives considered and why they were eliminated from further study. This information is also summarized in Table 3-2 on page 3-5 of the Draft EIS. In general, these alternatives alone would not effectively reduce overall traffic congestion in the Study Area and, therefore, would not meet the purpose and need for the proposed action.</p>

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Wildlife movement	<p>There is significant data from within Arizona (& elsewhere) that clearly shows that <u>multifunctional</u> crossings do not function for most target species. The human disturbance renders such structures completely ineffectual for maintaining/repairing wildlife connectivity. There is also data that shows wildlife connectivity mitigation structures are most effective when located based on a multi-year movement study (following target species movements around and across the proposed alignment). Please discuss the likelihood of such a study (following tortoise, mule deer, mountain lion, javelin, and other species) in a time frame that would allow findings to steer design location of mitigation components.</p> <p>Scott Sprague</p>	<p>Wildlife species in the project area (including mule deer, mountain lion and javelina) are commonly found in the urban interface and are generally not reluctant to use structures crossing beneath roadways; partially due to the fact that the most common times of use for humans and wildlife tend to occur at different times of the day. The proposed crossings are located at washes, which are the most likely wildlife movement corridors due to topography and resources. In addition to these larger crossings, culverts at smaller washes would serve as connection points for smaller wildlife. Culverts would generally be placed in natural drainage areas that are not heavily used by humans.</p> <p>There is some past research that indicates human use of wildlife passages may impact wildlife use to varying degrees. The most well-known example of this research focused on crossings of the Trans-Canada Highway in Banff National Park. The results of the extensive research on the Trans-Canada Highway do not show that human use has a dramatic impact on wildlife as use of the Banff structures has been substantial and continues to increase. In Arizona, research by the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) along SR 260 found highly compatible use of a dual-use (multifunctional) underpass that linked the communities of Christopher Creek and Hunter Creek. This particular underpass exhibited some of the most diverse and substantial wildlife use of the underpasses monitored in their long-term project (Dodd et al. 2012). Along SR 77, a Wildlife Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) closely scrutinized this issue for the two planned wildlife passages that will be built within a similar urban-influenced landscape in and adjacent to Oro Valley. The TAC evaluated all available information and determined that the temporal patterns of human (daytime) versus wildlife (crepuscular and nocturnal) use are not expected to result in a significant degree of incompatibility. Furthermore, such dual-use, multifunctional structures situated within urban-influenced landscapes, in this instance adjacent to South Mountain with its extensive trail network, offer effective and efficient use of limited taxpayer funds.</p> <p>We do not dispute the potential benefit of conducting a "multi-year" study to locate wildlife mitigation measures. However, it is also important to recognize that such studies need to be conducted in areas exhibiting priority wildlife-related highway safety and connectivity issues; the section of the highway corridor where the multiuse crossings are proposed was not identified as a linkage zone within the 2006 Arizona Wildlife Linkages Assessment or the 2012 Maricopa County Wildlife Connectivity Assessment, and likely will exhibit relative low wildlife-vehicle collision incidence in the future due to low wildlife densities found within this portion of the corridor. The 2012 Maricopa County Wildlife Connectivity Assessment did identify a movement corridor at the southwest end of South Mountain Park. A large bridge proposed for the roadway in this area would allow continued wildlife connectivity in this area.</p> <p>In February of 2006, a meeting was held between Federal Highway Administration, Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), and AGFD to discuss wildlife crossing locations and general design. ADOT and FHWA committed to additional coordination with AGFD on this issue as design progresses.</p>

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Biology	<p>Has the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) been consulted regarding the Sonoran desert tortoise? As a candidate species, this consultation should not be included as a possible <u>mitigation</u> effort – it should have already occurred & information from that consultation should have been included in the DEIS. This is critical info in order for the public to be able to provide substantive comments & to thoroughly understand potential impacts. Also, will preconstruction surveys be conducted? Will a qualified biologist be on site? What other actual mitigation will occur?</p> <p>Tiffany Sprague</p>	<p>USFWS was a part of the normal ADOT scoping effort and, in response, a letter was received from USFWS on October 29, 2001. Since that time, the list of federally-protected species was reviewed on 8/22/11 and again on 4/9/13. In addition, the USFWS received a copy of the DEIS for their review and comment. Additional coordination with the USFWS will take place once the preferred alignment has been selected and before the EIS is finalized. Because the tortoise is a candidate species and not formally listed under the Endangered Species Act, this may take the form of technical assistance correspondence with USFWS rather than Section 7 consultation under the Act, which applies only to formally listed species. FHWA and ADOT regularly coordinate with USFWS regarding the Sonoran desert tortoise and will implement mitigation measures to avoid any direct impacts to tortoises during construction. These measures will include training of construction personnel for awareness of concerns regarding Sonoran desert tortoises, identification of Sonoran desert tortoises, and procedures to follow if a tortoise is encountered in the construction area. If a tortoise is found in the area, work would stop until appropriate avoidance measures have been implemented to protect the tortoise from construction activities; if that is not practical, the tortoise would be relocated. Depending on the results of pre-construction surveys, a qualified biologist will be on site or on-call to assist with relocation of tortoises if they cannot be avoided during construction.</p>
Alternative modes of travel	<p>When will ADOT get serious about alternative modes of transportation, specifically mass transit? The DEIS glosses over this by saying transit wouldn't meet needs of the area but doesn't provide clear evidence of this. The \$2 billion going toward the freeway (not to mention the amount spent over the last 25 years) would go a long way toward improving transit & alleviating congestion on roadways.</p> <p>Tiffany Sprague</p>	<p>Integration of a freeway and a light rail system as a single transportation corridor is included in the Maricopa Association of Governments' <i>Regional Transportation Plan</i> at two locations: along Interstate 10 (Papago Freeway) and along State Route 51 (Piestewa Freeway). The proposed freeway would offer additional opportunities for implementing regional freeway-dependent transit services such Express and Rapid bus routes.</p> <p>Beginning on page 3-5, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) discusses the transit alternatives considered and why they were eliminated from further study. This information is also summarized in Table 3-2 on page 3-5 of the Draft EIS. In general, these alternatives alone would not effectively reduce overall traffic congestion in the Study Area and, therefore, would not meet the purpose and need for the proposed action.</p>
Alternative modes of travel	<p>Can we put a study into public transportation and transit to "handle the projected increase of traffic" so that it can be successful and able to handle the increase? More people & animals (economically & health) would benefit from public transit, than the building of this freeway. For example people of lower to lower middle class cannot afford a car and its expenses and would benefit greatly from transit throughout the valley. With public transit people of lower income, age, and those unable to obtain a license can get where they need to go more efficiently. The overall health and air quality of the valley would benefit in a positive way.</p> <p>Ariel LeBarron</p>	<p>The proposed freeway would offer additional opportunities for implementing regional freeway-dependent transit services such Express and Rapid bus routes. Most freeway/light rail combinations radiate from a central demand generator (for example, a central business district or a major airport). No such systems are known to follow a circumferential route, as the proposed freeway would.</p> <p>Beginning on page 3-5, the Draft EIS discusses the transit alternatives considered and why they were eliminated from further study. This information is also summarized in Table 3-2 on page 3-5 of the Draft EIS. In general, these alternatives alone would not effectively reduce overall traffic congestion in the Study Area and, therefore, would not meet the purpose and need for the proposed action.</p>