



## SR 89A Oak Creek Canyon Improvements

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Why do these improvements need to be done?**

All three improvements are vital to preserve the integrity and safety of State Route 89A. The highway was built in a canyon with a lot of rock-cut faces, which erode over time due to weather conditions. This leads to large rocks, sediment and other debris on the roadway, which creates significant safety and maintenance issues. The improvements include:

- Rockfall Mitigation
- Drainage & Sediment Control
- Pumphouse Wash Bridge Rehabilitation

The *Rockfall Mitigation* improvement will help reduce the potential of large rocks falling onto the roadway at two locations along SR 89A. There have been several previous emergency closures due to rockfall events blocking the roadway.

The *Drainage & Sediment Control* improvement will reduce erosion to preserve deteriorating slopes and reduce downstream pollution as well as minimize or prevent future unplanned closures of SR 89A due to sediment or rocks blocking the roadway. In addition, the *Pumphouse Wash Bridge Rehabilitation* improvement is needed to maintain the structural integrity of the bridge, which is past its service life.

In summary, the improvements are needed to continue maintaining safety and access for motorists along SR 89A in Oak Creek Canyon.

#### **What has occurred since the last public meeting in 2018?**

The nature of the SR 89A corridor and the type of work being performed required extensive coordination with area public and private agency partners to determine how best to construct these projects, while minimizing impacts to drivers and canyon residents and businesses.

We discussed the pros and cons of two construction approaches:

Completely closing the north end of Oak Creek Canyon, which would get the improvements completed sooner, but with more driver and local impacts.

OR

Leaving SR 89A open with a single alternating north- and southbound travel lane through the work zones and limited full closures, but with a longer project duration.

After studying possible construction options and obtaining input from our agency stakeholders, ADOT decided to keep SR 89A open during construction with lane restrictions and limited closures for work

that cannot safely be done around traffic. In February 2022, the Arizona State Transportation Board awarded the \$11.1 million construction contract to Fisher Sand and Gravel Company.

**When will work begin and what can we expect during construction?**

Construction is expected to start early this spring and be completed by the end of 2023. SR 89A will remain open to traffic with the exception of limited daytime and overnight closures. Once construction starts, the highway will be narrowed to one lane only through the work zone(s) with alternating north- and southbound travel. Traffic-control will be maintained using a combination of temporary traffic signals and/or a flagging operation. ADOT is committed to completing the improvements as quickly as possible, while balancing the transportation and access needs of local communities.

**How are canyon residents, workers and visitors going to get in and out of residential, business, campgrounds and other properties during the closures?**

Access will be maintained to properties in Oak Creek Canyon throughout the project. During the limited full closures on SR 89A, it may take longer to get to and from properties in the canyon since a detour will be in place. During the closures, property access to and from SR 89A will be maintained with detours either to the north or the south via SR 179 and I-17.

**How many closures are the contractor allowed during the project?**

Up to five full daytime closures from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday mornings through Thursday evenings at the south end (MP 375) and up to 10 overnight full closures from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. Sunday nights through Friday mornings at the north end (MP 387-389) of the project. The closures may be on consecutive or non-consecutive days.

**What will be the detour route when the full closures are in place?**

- Drivers traveling from *Sedona to Flagstaff* will use State Route 179 to Interstate 17.
- Drivers traveling from *Flagstaff to Sedona* will use I-17 to SR 179.
- Message boards and other social media will be used to notify the traveling public seven calendar days in advance of full closures.
- A signed detour will also be provided during the closures.

**How long of a delay do you anticipate the detour will take? How much longer will it take to get through the temporary signal/flagging areas that will be reduced to one lane with alternating traffic?**

The detour routes are expected to add about an hour of travel time, depending on the point of origin and destination, without any other additional traffic delays. The one lane of travel through the north end of the canyon with temporary signals is expected to add approximately 45 minutes during weekday off-peak times and approximately one hour during peak travel periods. However, this corridor is subject to wide variations in traffic levels so there could be times when travel times are higher.

**When will closure dates and times be made available to the public?**

The contractor is required to notify ADOT 20 business days in advance of all full closures. Once the closure and traffic-control plans are approved, ADOT will inform the public seven calendar days in advance through roadside message boards and email notification.

The five full closures at the south end (MP 375) of the project are not slated to occur until sometime between mid-May and late July 2023. The 10 overnight full closures at the north end (MP 387 - 389)

may occur anytime over the course of the project. However, it is important to note that closures and restrictions are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances.

**Will there be closures on weekends or holidays?**

Aside from the five daytime full closures at MP 375, which are allowed to occur from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays, we do not anticipate any weekend or holiday closures. However, there will be 24/7 lane restrictions in place at the bridge and erosion control work zones while construction is underway on these two improvements. This will include temporary traffic signals. Closures are subject to change based on unforeseen circumstances, such as weather or traffic incidents.

**How will we be notified of full closures?**

ADOT will notify the public seven calendar days in advance through roadside message boards and traffic alerts via email. The best way to stay informed is to sign up to receive traffic alerts, which will be emailed directly to your inbox. Visit the project web page at [azdot.gov/SR89A](http://azdot.gov/SR89A) to sign up. In addition, ADOT will post traffic restriction and closure information on the project website and via social media, and will provide regular updates to HOAs, businesses and other stakeholders in the canyon so they can share the information with others in the canyon.

**Why can't closures/work be done at night or during the winter when traffic is so much lower?**

Due to the type of work involved and nature of the narrow corridor with steep slopes, having the contractor work at night or during the winter when there is the possibility of ice and snow is both hazardous and much more costly. The blasting work at the south end of the project cannot be completed at night, as this would impose unacceptable safety risks to construction crews and the public. There is also some work, such as paving, that must be done in certain temperatures. In the Oak Creek Canyon/Sedona area, we typically shut down work during the winter due to the weather conditions.

**The closures and flagging operation will make it difficult for those of us in the canyon to get around.**

**Why can't construction be done without closures or fewer restrictions?**

Unfortunately, since SR 89A is so narrow there is no room to maintain one lane of traffic in each direction through the work zones during construction. Thus, it is not possible to safely construct the improvements without some limited full closures and single lane restrictions. We recognize any restrictions on SR 89A corridor are going to be inconvenient; however, we have done our best to keep the closures to a minimum and limit the overall impacts.

**What if I have a medical emergency or there is a wildfire in the canyon while construction is underway?**

Emergency access through the canyon will be maintained at all times for first responders and other emergency crews. First responders will be able to travel through the work areas as needed for medical or other emergencies. Regarding wildfires, there will be an emergency evacuation plan in place for canyon residents and businesses.

**Where will drivers be able to turn around if their vehicle is too large to go through the construction zone?**

There will be turnaround spots for drivers prior to the closure areas at the following locations:

South end of canyon:

- Northbound drivers can turn around at the roundabout just north of uptown Sedona.

- Southbound drivers can turn around near Purtymun Lane, just south of Sedona Views Bed and Breakfast.

North end of Canyon:

- Southbound drivers can turn around before the switchbacks at Oak Creek Vista.
- Northbound drivers can turn around near the Cave Springs Campground.

While the closures are in place, a “soft closure” will be set up to enable drivers to turn around or who need local access can get through up to the “hard closure” construction zone.

**During the rockfall mitigation work that will be occurring just north of Sedona city limits, will the blasting impact my property or the foundation of my home?**

The blasting that is planned as a part of this project will only occur in small applications. This means the potential impact on any surrounding properties outside the blasting zone will be limited. In addition, the contractor will have a specialized team onsite to ensure the blasting does not impact any surrounding structures.

The contract requirements for the ledge removal at MP 375 require controlled blasting practices with design work performed by a leading industry professional with extensive experience. ADOT pre-qualified all potential bidders for the project to ensure extensive knowledge and experience by the selected contractor. The blasting consultant will also utilize seismograph instrumentation to ensure vibrations are kept to a safe and manageable level. ADOT geotechnical engineers will also review every blasting plan to ensure public safety.

The contract also requires pre-construction condition surveys of all structures within 1,000 feet of the blasting area. These condition surveys will include video to document existing structural conditions of all buildings prior to the blasting work. The contractor shall be responsible for any damage. Any property owners who will need to have a pre-construction survey will be contacted by the contractor and receive more information about the process.

**I live just north of where the blasting will take place. If I need to go to the grocery store or into town on a day that a closure is scheduled, I have to drive all the way to Flagstaff and then back down. How can you justify such a lengthy detour that will be in place during the closures?**

The closures at this location will not occur until the summer of 2023. We are providing as much public notification as possible for these closures now so people have the opportunity to plan in advance. Additionally, we will provide the exact dates and times of the closures seven days in advance once our contractor has identified the closure date(s).