Questions for I-17, New River to Cordes Junction

1. Is an alternative through the Bumble Bee area still under consideration?

   No. Because of potential environmental concerns, Alternative H has been eliminated from further consideration.

2. Is an alternative through Black Canyon City still under consideration?

   No. The proposed new alignment alternatives depart the existing I -17 roadway more than ½ mile north of the existing Black Canyon City traffic interchange located at milepost 244.5.

3. Is Alternative D a viable alternative to the needs for widening I-17?

   Yes. Alternative D appears to be a viable alternative that would meet the purpose and need for the proposed widening of I-17. The impacts of this alternative relative to the other alternatives under consideration are currently being evaluated.

4. Is the I-17 Alternatives Study still in progress?

   No. The I-17 Alternatives Study, which was evaluating the long-term need for an alternative route between Phoenix and Flagstaff, has been combined with ADOT's "framework studies", one of which will address the long-range transportation needs for central Arizona over the next 50 years. Information on the framework studies is available at www.bqaz.gov.

5. Can ADOT widen the existing I-17?

   Yes. ADOT can widen existing I-17. However, this construction would be difficult due to the need to maintain traffic on the existing lanes through the construction zone where blasting will occur and massive quantities of material will need to be moved. Because there are no convenient alternate routes on which to divert traffic, widening existing I-17 will only be considered in combination with Alternative D or E.

6. Wouldn't it be cost effective to expand the existing I-17?

   No. It would be expensive to expand the existing I-17, both in terms of construction cost and in terms of delay costs to the traveling public. Construction would cost more and take longer than the other alternatives

because traffic would have to be maintained and controlled on the existing roadways and many construction activities would be limited to off-peak hours or nights.

7. Does ADOT consider the costs when looking at alternatives?

   Yes. Costs are one of numerous evaluation criteria. Other evaluation criteria include socioeconomic and environmental impacts, constructability, public input, right-of-way, utility impacts, drainage, geotechnical, and aesthetics.

8. If one of the reasons to change I-17 to reroute traffic in case of an accident, why not build parallel freeways throughout the entire state?

   ADOT and the Federal Highway Administration consider each highway individually. A parallel highway may resolve the issues for I-17; however, different solutions for improving traffic operations and adding capacity may apply depending on each highway's location, surrounding terrain, and other factors.

9. Does ADOT research and consider other states' alternatives such as bi-level systems? Think progressively like Colorado and I-5 (the Grapevine) in California.

   Yes. ADOT does consider solutions from other states when developing alternatives for Arizona highway projects. In developing and evaluating a full range of reasonable alternatives, ADOT considers, in addition to many other things, the rural or urban character of the surroundings. A bi-level highway would be more appropriate in an urban setting than a rural area such as surrounds this segment of Interstate 17.

10. How would construction affect the traveling public?

    Temporary lane closures will occur when the additional lanes are constructed. Some short-term complete closures may also be required. Construction of Alternative D would impact traffic more than Alternative E because the new Alternative D lanes would be closer to the existing roadways than Alternative E. Because Alternative D is located between the existing roadways, impacts to traffic are expected to be more severe and of longer duration. In addition, rock excavation and blasting for Alternative D could require closures of both northbound and southbound I-17.

11. Could construction of the preferred alternative be built in stages?

    Yes, the next phase of the study will include development of an implementation plan, which will identify priorities and organize the overall project into smaller projects that could be funded and constructed separately.

12. What alternative provides the least disruption to the desert and wildlife crossings?

    The build alternatives are similar to one another in terms of impacts to desert habitat and wildlife crossings.

13. What alternative offers the best solution for truck traffic?

    All of the build alternatives provide a climbing lane along the existing northbound roadway. Alternatives D4 and E4 both provide options for a less-severe northbound climbing grade than Alternative E5.

14. Why is the "No Build" alternative an option?

    The No Build Alternative is included in the evaluation of reasonable alternatives because it provides the environmental baseline against which other alternatives are compared, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the implementing regulations of the Federal Highway Administration and ADOT.

15. What happened to the proposal for Sunrise Point Rest Area (on the east side of I-17)?

    The Sunrise Point Rest Area project was cancelled in 2003 because it was located in the Agua Fria National Monument and would have had adverse impacts to important cultural resources. The water requirements for the proposed facility would also have adversely affected water levels in the Agua Fria River drainage system, which was declining at that time due to the extended drought.

16. Will there be access from existing I-17 to/from the new freeway?

    Yes, both the northbound and southbound lanes of existing I-17 will connect to and from the new roadways.

17. When would a preferred alignment be built?

    As indicated above, the implementation plan will identify priorities and required funding for a series of construction projects. None of the proposed improvements will be programmed or funded until the NEPA process has been completed. Based on current funding and construction schedules, it is unlikely any improvements will be completed within the next five years.

18. Has ADOT worked with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) in considering the alternatives?

    ADOT has worked and continues to work very closely with BLM and AGFD in evaluating the alternatives currently under consideration regarding consistency with BLM's Resource Management Plan and AGFD's desire to improve wildlife connectivity.

19. What alternative provides the best solution for incident management?

    Alternative E4 would provide the best solution because it provides the greatest flexibility for routing traffic around incidents or maintenance activities.

20. Why do we need a climbing lane, even though we are providing for four lanes in each direction?

    The recommended roadway improvements are intended to meet the roadway capacity needs through the year 2030. The four lanes in each direction will easily meet the capacity needs in the near term, but projections indicate the volume of traffic on I-17 between Black Canyon City and Cordes Junction will approximately double over the next 20 years. Freeway operations can be adversely affected by just a small number of trucks and RVs on the uphill section. The climbing lane provides a separate lane for the slower-moving heavy vehicles, leaving the other lanes available for faster-moving traffic. In order to provide an acceptable level of service in the year 2030, an additional lane is needed in the steep uphill section.