

SR 189 – MARIPOSA ROAD, NOGALES

SR 189, also known as Mariposa Road, is a 3-mile urban roadway that links the U.S.-Mexico border crossing at Mariposa with Interstate 19 in Nogales. The Mariposa Port of Entry (POE) is Arizona's main commercial border crossing, through which 80% of all international commercial traffic entries into the state occur. The POE today processes between 1,200 and 2,400 trucks per day, but this rate is expected to increase to 3,000 trucks by 2014. Nearly 60% of the winter produce consumed in the entire country comes through this port, making it critical not only to Arizona's economy, but also that of the US overall.

The current SR 189 is a five-lane undivided highway passing through developed areas. SR 189 is currently congested, especially during peak produce season. Traffic is expected to increase significantly in the future following the current construction at the POE facilities, further compounding the congestion on SR 189.

The major construction project at the Port of Entry was moved up approximately five-years thanks to an ARRA award. While this unexpected windfall was very welcome, it only enabled the construction at the port. No funding was given to ADOT to move up improvements in the connecting highway (SR 189). As a result, ADOT is facing a situation where a new, expanded, and modernized port will put substantial additional traffic on a roadway that is not equipped to handle the increase and in fact is already congested.

ADOT is considering options for a new or expanded highway to handle the increased volume of traffic. . The primary objective of the proposed new link is to relieve congestion on SR 189 which traverses through fairly dense population and employment centers. Depending on the option selected, costs are between \$52 and \$65 million.

One option is build a roadway (new alignment of SR 189) from the POE directly to I-19, south of the current interchange, to improve the flow of traffic. The new alignment offers a significantly more efficient route for the commercial vehicle traffic crossing the Mariposa POE in both directions.

Because the needs have been moved up by several years, ADOT has not programmed the improvements in the five-year plan and has no excess funds to move more quickly on the construction. However, these improvements are critical to Nogales and to Arizona's value-added produce industry, which consolidates, packages and ships the produce that comes across the border to all points of the US. Because of the perishable nature of the product, rapid movement is critical.

Because this highway services primarily (though not exclusively) commercial vehicles and serves a specific, well defined commercial purpose, it is a good candidate for a public private partnership. The option of building a new alignment in a reasonable time period is viable only if private funding can be leveraged to move the project forward.

The highway leading to and from the Port of Entry on the Mexican side is currently tolled, so drivers are accustomed to paying a toll. The toll would be borne primarily by the trucking community crossing the border – passenger vehicles could be exempted, or could be asked to pay the toll at Mariposa because they have the option to cross at the downtown (DeConcini) Port of Entry at no cost. The possibility of a tolled highway has been discussed in Nogales for several years, even before ADOT's P3 legislation was passed in 2009, so it is not a new concept.

The concept of trucks backing up into the Port of Entry as they enter Arizona would be chaotic for the port and for the city, it would hurt Arizona's produce industry, and would cause traffic congestion and air quality concerns in Nogales. The ability to move up the construction of the new link and build it to a level of maximum efficiency is critical, and financial options are limited.



