

Navajo County Central Area Transportation Study

Open House #2

July 14, 2009
4:30 PM – 5:30 PM (Open House)
7:00 PM – 7:10 PM (Council Presentation)
City of Holbrook Council Chambers
Holbrook, Arizona

Meeting Summary

Open House Participants -

See attached sign-in sheet.

Mr. Dan Marum, Project Principal for the Navajo County Central Area Transportation Study, presented an overview of the study, analysis results for alternative route assessments and next steps.

Background

During 2006, Wilson & Company was contracted by Navajo County to develop a transportation plan for Southern Navajo County. The study area generally included the communities of Snowflake, Taylor, Show Low, Pinetop Lakeside and portions of unincorporated Navajo and Apache counties. During late 2007, the Wilson & Company Team was contracted through the County, and partially funded by ADOT through the Small Area Transportation Studies program to complete a transportation study for the remainder of the County, not including tribal lands. This current study area generally includes Holbrook, Joseph City, and Winslow, and the unincorporated areas within Navajo County including Heber-Overgaard that were outside of the original study boundary.

Project Goals

There were six project goals to accomplish during the course of this study, including:

- Develop a Countywide Transportation Plan
- Develop a Countywide Travel Demand Model
- Integrate multi-modal needs
- Identify safety and capacity needs through year 2030
- Identify freight related needs and routes
- Identify preliminary environmental constraints

Presentation

This transportation study was driven by several key issues, primarily freight, safety and future year capacity. Both the cities of Holbrook and Winslow have freight traffic and rail crossing related issues. Within Holbrook, the City has one at-grade crossing on SR-77. Within Winslow, there are two crossings located at Williamson Avenue (SR-87) and at West Third Street, located on the west side of town.

During the early stages of the project, the Arizona Department of Transportation was working on finishing statewide efforts, including the Rural Transit Needs Assessment, Access Management Program, developing a Statewide Travel Demand Model and the Arizona Multimodal Freight Analysis Study. Originally, the study team was going to use the Southern Navajo Travel Demand Model developed by Wilson & Company in 2006 to complete the travel assessments. Instead, it was determined that the Statewide travel demand model would be a more robust model to use, providing a statewide background travel demand network, zone system and consistent trip generation coding to serve as the background model for this current study.

The study is to identify year 2030 transportation needs and surface potential options that could have merit for future study, environmental clearance and engineering design. Year 2030 transportation needs are based on anticipated socioeconomic forecasts that include household and employment projections. The projections used for this study were based on staff input from the County and Cities and agreed upon by the Technical Advisory Committee developed for this study.

Late 2008, the study team was approached by a major land owner in Navajo County. Aztec Land and Cattle owns over 200,000 acres, and are working through the entitlement process for future development. The study team integrated their forecasted development information to identify core needs and identify the impacts on the regional transportation system.

An assessment was completed for the transportation network in and around the City of Winslow. Currently, Williamson Avenue serves as the primary crossing under the railroad tracks. The crossing is historic and is limited due to the width and height of the underpass. This two-lane underpass is sometimes closed due to escorted vehicles traveling under the structure. Additionally, Third Street provides an additional crossing, however vehicles must go through a residential area on the south side of the tracks, and use a low-capacity interchange at Hipkoe Drive.

Two general alternative routes were examined to identify potential transportation system benefits, including:

- An east side alternative alignment that would connect SR-99 to Transcon Lane and the interchange with I-40. Two options with this connection were examined including a connection between SR-99 and Transcon Lane, as well as a more direct connection between SR-87 and Transcon Lane. Based on this initial assessment, there is not a significant difference between these two alternatives in terms of anticipated traffic shifts.

- A west side alternative alignment that would connect SR-87 with the Third Street overpass along the south side of the airport. Based on this assessment, the anticipated travel demand would not significantly shift to the Third Street overpass due to the longer distance.

City of Winslow staff also provided a high-growth option that assumed a higher level of households and employment in the Winslow area. The same results were found for this higher growth scenario, however capacity issues were prevalent with the current underpass.

At a system-wide level, the analysis shows that there is a need to further study the SR-77 corridor between Holbrook and Snowflake, and the SR-377 and SR-277 corridors between Heber-Overgaard and Holbrook. These two primary travel corridors connect the southern and western communities of Navajo County with the I-40 corridor. Both of these corridors generally converge south of Holbrook and use the single available railroad crossing.

Two general City of Holbrook related alternative alignments were presented for input:

- An east side alternative alignment that would connect SR-77/US-180 to the east Navajo Boulevard exit on I-40. Currently there is a stub street on the south side of the interchange that this alignment could tie into. The analysis that the Wilson & Company team conducted shows that there is still a significant amount of traffic that would still want to use the current crossing, ultimately causing capacity and potential safety issues in the downtown.
- A west side alternative alignment that would connect SR-77 to the Hopi Drive interchange on I-40. The analysis shows that there could be a significant shift in traffic, primarily through traffic to that west side interchange. The analysis also shows that the traffic that would remain on Navajo Boulevard using the existing crossing is anticipated to be a similar daily traffic volume as what is seen today.

Based on Wilson & Company's assessment, it was recommended that the City retain both east and west side alternatives for future study.

Prior to the briefing, there was an Open House to receive public input on the project. Comments gained from the Open House include:

- There is concern over a bypass of the central core area of Holbrook as a result of either east or west alternative routes.
- ADOT concern over at-grade railroad crossing and safety/capacity issues associated with the current 4-lane section of Navajo Boulevard north of Hopi Drive.
- If Navajo Boulevard was improved, businesses on both sides would be impacted and potentially would need to be removed.
- By providing both alternative routes (Options 1 and 4), the City could proceed with a redevelopment plan for downtown with on-street angle parking and new streetscape to create a downtown destination with a "Main Street" setting with lower traffic volumes.
- Will there be alternative route that solves the at-grade railroad crossing issue? Discussion of this topic included a summary of how difficult it would be to provide a

grade separation with SR-77 due to the length of the bridge, access and the buildings that exist in downtown Holbrook.

- There was support for both alternatives 1 and 4 as a secondary route without having to use Obed bridge. Consider alternatives 1 and 4 as part of a long-range plan to serve all development areas within the City.