



South Mountain Transportation Corridor Study

Citizens Advisory Team
Draft Technical Report Summary

Public Comments

Why request public comment in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process?

As part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), requirements are established for public input during the preparation of an EIS. On this study, the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), with the concurrence of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), has established an extensive public involvement plan, soliciting input throughout the process. The purpose of seeking public input is to assist the study team in identifying any new data pertinent to the EIS process and to gauge the understanding of the study status. Over the course of time, public issues and concerns regarding a project can change and seeking input throughout the process provides awareness of changes to the study team.

What are the goals of this public involvement program?

The goals of this public involvement program are to:

- Obtain public input to assist in a well-planned and researched EIS for the proposed action
- Provide ongoing information on the study and obtain input from the primary stakeholders and broader public
- Identify key issues and concerns of the public and ensure that these are appropriately considered during the process
- Develop and implement a process that maintains an open and continuing communication among the public, ADOT, FHWA and the study team
- Use multiple communication tools to effectively engage the public as a whole, thereby ensuring equal access to the NEPA process

How has the public been involved during this process?

Due to the importance of the proposed freeway to the region's transportation network, the potential impacts, and the level of public interest, ADOT and FHWA developed and implemented a comprehensive, inclusive and adaptive public involvement strategy for this project. This effort represents one of ADOT's most extensive public involvement programs undertaken in the Phoenix area. The following sections summarize activities since 2001.

More than 200 presentations have been made to community groups, homeowners' associations, chambers of commerce, village planning committees, trade associations, Citizens Advisory Team meetings and other interested parties.

Ten public meetings have been held. Fifteen days prior to each meeting, display advertising was placed in *The Arizona Republic*, the *Ahwatukee Foothills News*, the *Gila River Indian News*, the *Tribune*, *La Voz* and the *West Valley View*. (A total newspaper circulation of approximately 260,000 carried an announcement of each public meeting.)

One meeting notice flier and four newsletters have been distributed throughout the Study Area in the following quantities (per distribution per meeting): 28,500 door hangers; 5,000 inserts in the *Gila River Indian News*; and 28,000 inserts in the *Ahwatukee Foothills News*. In addition, newsletters and fliers were sent to over 4,500 individuals on the project mailing list. In



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November 2008, a newsletter updating the public about the study will be distributed to the Study Area and mailing list.

A study Web site (www.ValleyFreeways.com or www.SouthMountainFreeway.com) and e-mail address (ADOT@PolicyDevelopmentGroup.com) was provided so that the public could receive the latest study information and provide feedback. Approximately half of the comments that have been received were submitted electronically through the Web site or by e-mail. Over 5,000 comments have been received.

More than 790 news articles have been published in the region's newspapers.

A study hotline number (602.712.7006) was established so that the public could provide feedback on the study. The hotline is checked daily, with messages forwarded to the appropriate individuals for a response. Over 480 calls have been received.

What are the issues that have the highest public concerns?

This document summarizes public comments received from November 2005 to October 2008. Previous documents have summarized the comments received prior to November 2005. Comment topics were categorized by the study team as being related to the alternatives, community, construction, design, environment, process, right-of-way and miscellaneous:

- Alternatives—comments that identified an alternative preference (including No-Action) or specifically related to the Eastern or Western sections
- Community—comments regarding area issues, such as economics, relocations, growth, character and cohesion, facilities and services
- Construction—comments related to potential project cost and schedule
- Design—comments related to proposed interchanges, operations and safety
- Environment—comments concerning air and noise pollution, health concerns, traffic, energy, utilities, land use, water, floodplains, geology, visual, farmlands, secondary and cumulative Impacts
- Process—comments concerning the public, agency and alternatives screening processes
- Right-of-way—comments concerning properties and facilities in the Study Area and the right-of-way process
- Miscellaneous—other comments received

Below is a summary of the frequently received questions and comments regarding each of the identified issues. Please note that additional specific comments and questions were received and are considered throughout the NEPA process.

Alternatives

- Support of one of the alternatives (W55, W71, W101, E1)
- Support of the No-Action Alternative
- Support of another alternative (such as on Gila River Indian Community [GRIC] land)



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Community

- Concern that the freeway would cause an increase in traffic congestion on local streets.
- Does ADOT account for the lost homeowner's association fees from properties that they purchase?
- What should be expected for the loss of property taxes due to ADOT purchasing properties?
- The freeway would lock in Ahwatukee causing degradation to the community.
- How do impacts to residences in this area compare to those for the other freeways that have been recently constructed?

Construction

- Why wasn't this freeway constructed years ago, when there wasn't as much development in the area?
- When would construction begin and how long would it last?
- What procedures does ADOT follow when blasting rock near residential neighborhoods?
- What would be done with the excess material from the excavated rock from the South Mountains?

Design

- What is the profile option that ADOT is recommending (aboveground, belowground or surface level) and would it affect noise levels and visual quality?
- The level of engineering design is not adequate to determine the feasibility of the project; the freeway should be designed to 100 percent to determine the full extent of the impacts.
- When will information be released to the public regarding the drainage data and the proposed locations for retention or detention basins?
- Where would the interchanges be located for this proposed freeway?
- Where would the noise walls be located?
- Would rubberized asphalt be used on the freeway?
- Would any utilities need to be relocated, and if so, where?
- Could a parkway be considered along the proposed alignment, rather than a freeway?
- How many lanes would this freeway contain, six or ten?
- High-occupancy vehicle lanes should be included in the initial construction and not added later.



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Environmental

- This freeway would cause increased air, noise and light pollution to the area.
- What would be the health effects of a freeway in this area with the South Mountains trapping some of the air pollution in Ahwatukee?
- What are the health and noise impacts of having this proposed freeway adjacent to several schools on Pecos Road?
- How much would noise increase in the Study Area?
- Would this freeway impact any cultural sites?
- How were the cultural sites identified?
- Why would ADOT propose an alternative that would require excavation in the South Mountains?
- The proposed freeway should not be constructed in the Phoenix South Mountain Park/Preserve.
- What is the definition of a Section 4(f) facility?
- Can the list of identified hazardous materials sites in the Study Area be provided to the public?
- Would this freeway impede Salt River water flow?
- What level of flood protection was evaluated?
- What would ADOT do to accommodate wildlife?

Process

- Can the public make formal comments on the study before ADOT and FHWA make their recommendation on this proposed freeway?
- What is the Maricopa Association of Governments' role in this process?
- When is the next public meeting scheduled?
- Request for ADOT to present the latest study information at a homeowner association meeting.
- ADOT did not take the SMCAT Western Section alignment recommendation into account when they selected the W55 Alternative as the preliminary preferred alternative.

Right-of-way

- Would the proposed freeway alignment impact a particular property (or a property that someone is considering purchasing)?
- What is the ADOT right-of-way purchasing process and are property owners given fair market value for their land?



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- What is ADOT doing for those individuals who can't sell their homes because of the location to the proposed freeway?
- Is ADOT maintaining the properties that they have already purchased in the Study Area?
- When purchasing property, how does ADOT compensate the loss of homeowner association dues?
- What are ADOT's criteria for early buy out of properties that are located in the proposed right-of-way?
- How does ADOT compensate owners of wells in the proposed right-of-way?
- Why isn't ADOT preventing development in the proposed right-of-way?
- Does ADOT compensate property owners for a loss of visual quality, due to a freeway or noise wall related to a freeway?
- Does a home adjacent to a freeway lose property value?

Miscellaneous

- When will the Draft EIS be released for public review?
- When will the decision, regarding whether this freeway will be constructed, be made?
- Information regarding development on GRIC land is not being incorporated into the study. Concern that ADOT is making decisions on this freeway without all the necessary information.
- Is this proposed freeway a part of the CANAMEX Corridor?
- Concern that the proposed freeway will be a truck bypass route.
- How is this freeway being funded?
- How are increases in energy costs affecting this proposed project?
- What is the latest projected total cost?
- How often is the information in the working copy of the Draft EIS updated?



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What is the relevance of this information?

The understanding of public comment is an integral component of the NEPA process. This document summarizes public comments received from November 2005 to October 2008. The study team will continue to use public input to “mold” the scope of this study. Additionally, ADOT and FHWA will continue to seek input from the public, agencies and jurisdictions regarding the proposed freeway through the EIS process, and, if an action alternative is selected in the Record of Decision, through the design phase and construction.

What opportunities will be offered to the public when the Draft and Final EIS is released for public review?

During the public release of the Draft EIS, there will be a 90-day public comment period (a 45-day comment period is the minimum requirement). The public comments received during the comment period will be evaluated and addressed in the Final EIS. The public will also have the opportunity to comment on the Final EIS. When this document is released for public review, the public will have a 60-day public comment period to submit their final comments (a 30-day comment period is the minimum requirement). Copies of the Draft EIS and Final EIS will be made available to the public during the comment period through a variety of methods, including online access through the project Web site and advertised information repositories (e.g., libraries, FedEx/Kinkos)

As a member of the Citizens Advisory Team, how can you review the entire technical report?

The complete technical report is available for review by making an appointment with Mike Bruder at 602-712-6836 or Mark Hollowell at 602-712-6819.