South Mountain Corridor Study
Citizens Advisory Team
Meeting Summary

Date: April 17, 2008
Time: 5:30 p.m.
Location: South Mountain Community College

SMCAT Members Attending:
Camilo Acosta, Arlington HOA
Sandy Bahr, Sierra Club
Chad Blostone, The Foothills HOA
Lisa Bray, South Mountain/Laveen Chamber of Commerce
Peggy Eastburn, Estrella Village Planning Committee
Heidi Fischer, Ahwatukee Village Planning Committee
Michael Goodman, Phoenix Mountains Preservation Council
Wes Lines, Laveen Village Planning Committee
Scott Mittelsteadt, Sierra Club
Dave Olney, Valley Forward
Nathaniel Percharo, Pecos Road/I-10 Landowners Association
Laurie Prendergast, Laveen Citizens for Responsible Development
John Rodriguez, Lakewood HOA
Timmothy Stone, Bougainvillea HOA
Carola Tamarkin, Ahwatukee Foothills Chamber of Commerce
Terry Tatterfield, Kyrene Elementary School District
Woody Thomas, Southwest Valley Chamber of Commerce
Carnell Thurman, City of Avondale
Jim Wesley, Foothills Reserve HOA

SMCAT Members Absent:
Gila River Indian Community – District 4
Silverado Ranch HOA
Laurel Arndt, Ahwatukee Village Planning Committee
Al Brown, Arizona Public Health Association
Tamala Daniels, South Mountain Village Planning Committee
Clayton Danzeisen, Maricopa County Farm Bureau
Diane Krecker, Mountain Park Ranch HOA
David Lafferty, City of Tolleson
Michael Norton, Laveen Village Planning Committee
Jack Sellers, East Valley Partnership
Brian Smith, Calabrea HOA
Dave Williams, Arizona Trucking Association

Staff and Consultants
Leroy Brady, ADOT
Michael Bruder, ADOT
Floyd Roehrich, ADOT
Timothy Tait, ADOT
Justin White, ADOT
Bill Vachon, FHWA
Mike Book, HDR
Kevin Grove, HDR
Pat Higgins, HDR
Heather Honsberger, HDR
Carl Petrich, HDR
Ben Spargo, HDR
Fred Erickson, KCA
Tom Keller, KCA
Joy Butler, PDG
Dean Howard, PDG

Citizens:
Chris Danielson
Derrick Denis
James Gernand
Joe Hamilton
Lisa Hamilton
Don Herp
Jim Jochim
Dan Johnson
Steve Johnson
Doug Mings
Doug Murphy
Lisa Percharb
Colleen Sparks
Melverine Young

Meeting Agenda	Speaker
Welcome and introductions	Tom Keller, KCA
SMCAT role and responsibilities	Tom Keller, KCA
Team member questions and comments	All
Parking lot issues update	Ben Spargo, HDR
Visual resources	Mike Bruder, ADOT Carl Petrich, HDR
Biological resources	Mike Bruder, ADOT Kevin Grove, HDR
Land use	Mike Bruder, ADOT Pat Higgins, HDR

Meeting began at 6 p.m.

Tom Keller: Good evening everyone. Can we begin, please?

Those of you who may be attending this meeting for the first time, it is important to note that the members of the South Mountain Citizens Advisory Team are seated at the table in the front of the room. The members of the project team, HDR Engineering and the Arizona Department of Transportation representatives are seated along the walls.

There are some people in attendance tonight who are here representing other members of the SMCAT. I would like to welcome Heidi Fischer, who is sitting in for Laurel Arndt with the Ahwatukee Village Planning Committee, Scott Middlestedt, who is here for Sandy Bahr with the Sierra Club, and Wes Lines, who is here on behalf of Michael Norton with the Laveen Village Planning Committee. We also have Jim Wesley who will be representing the Foothills Reserve Homeowners Association. Finally, Woody Thomas with the Southwest Chamber of Commerce will be replacing Don Jones. Is there anyone I have missed?

No response

Tom Keller: We have a quorum tonight. Thank you for your attendance.

We always start each meeting with the purpose statement. The South Mountain Citizens Advisory Team will provide a forum for communication between ADOT, FHWA, and the local community regarding the proposed South Mountain Freeway. The SMCAT is a voluntary advisory team and not a decision-making body, and it will not be responsible for decisions made by the State of Arizona or FHWA. The SMCAT will meet regularly to review project status and provide input on issues that are relevant to the project. The

single purpose of the SMCAT is to provide a build or no-build recommendation for the South Mountain Freeway.

The regular process for our meeting protocol–introducing the key players, establishing a quorum, reviewing the agenda and timekeeping process, discussing the standards for behavior notification, outlining the discussion process, welcoming visitors and discussing breaks.

SMCAT members are expected to treat each other with mutual courtesy, respect and dignity. Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated and will be grounds for exclusion from further participation in SMCAT activities. Any SMCAT member who acts disrespectfully toward other members, disrupts the SMCAT process, or is unable to attend meetings on a consistent basis may be required by the third party facilitator, the ADOT public involvement team, or a majority of the other SMCAT members to leave or resign from the SMCAT.

We have been having some outstanding meetings. At the break, like usual, I will be passing out the SMCAT evaluation forms. At the end of the meeting, please make sure to complete this forms and return them to us.

Joy Butler has some blue question cards at her desk in the back of the room. These cards are for use by anyone who wishes to submit a comment or question. The last agenda item is to read the questions submitted on these cards. At that time, if you submit a blue card, you have the option of reading the question yourself or I can read it for you.

Before I introduce Ben Spargo, who will be coordinating the presentations tonight, note that we have now assigned dates to some more of the upcoming SMCAT meetings. As you can see, tonight's topics will be visual resources, biological resources and land use. The tentative schedule of meetings and topics includes: May 22–hazardous materials, energy, geotechnical and utilities; June 26–social conditions, environmental justice and noise; July 24–section 4 (f), section 6 (f) and cultural resources; and August 28–economics, prime and unique farmlands and cumulative and secondary impacts. You can see that the following meetings are scheduled for September 25 and October 23. This will take us to a point where we can determine whether or not the Draft EIS will be available. These topics are consistent with what the SMCAT has suggested for discussion items.

Public Question: Can you go back to the slide with the future SMCAT meeting dates?

Presentation was returned to slide showing SMCAT future meeting dates

Fred Erickson: Can you read them okay?

Tom Keller: We will leave these on the screen for just a minute.

We have a fairly tight schedule tonight so we ask that the SMCAT hold their questions until we get to the question-and-answer sessions at the end of each of the topics. I will help to manage the time so that we can keep on schedule.

Ben Spargo: I wanted to mention that the parking lot issues memorandum was e-mailed to the SMCAT members a week ago and is now available electronically on the project Web site. As a part of these questions last month, there was a question regarding the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Flood Insurance Rate Maps, which were being used in development of the Draft EIS. We have some of the different maps that were used throughout this process ranging in date from 1988 to 2005. These maps are taped up on the wall in the back of the room. At the break, I will be back there to answer any questions you may have about these maps. If you have any follow-up questions or questions you feel are not included in the parking lot issues memorandum, please submit a blue question card or e-mail a member of the project team so that we will know that your question wasn't answered completely or addressed.

Mike Bruder, a transportation manager with ADOT Valley Project Management, will give tonight's presentations, and Carl Petrich, Kevin Grove and Pat Higgins with HDR will be assisting him. After each topic presentation, there will be time for a brief question-and-answer session. We also have Leroy Brady, the chief landscape architect with ADOT's Roadway Engineering Group, and Justin White, a biologist with ADOT's Environmental Planning Group in attendance. They will assist with answering questions specific to their respective fields.

The presentations this week are laid out in a format where Mike Bruder will introduce the issue and why it is studied followed by an HDR representative discussing the details of each issue as it relates to the proposed South Mountain Freeway. They will also discuss what the impacts would be for the action or build alternatives, and also what the impacts would be if no action or the no-build alternative were selected. Each presentation concludes with examples of some of the ways ADOT could mitigate the issue to reduce impacts, should this freeway be constructed.

Before we start with our first presentation on visual impacts, it is important to know that ADOT has been working with various agencies throughout the study process. The study team members have met with various federal, state and local agencies to ensure that everyone is aware of this potential project. You can see that we have involved a number of the federal, state and local agencies, as well as the Gila River Indian Community.

With that I will turn the microphone over to Mike Bruder.

Mike Bruder: Good evening. Normally, Mark Hollowell would be giving this presentation. Unfortunately, Mark had to take care of some personal issues.

So, what are visual resources? They refer to the visual quality, character and sensitivity of an area. Quality refers to the attractiveness of the attributes based on landforms, water

characteristics, vegetation patterns and architectural elements. Character is the natural, physical and architectural features that provide an identity and sense of place. Sensitivity is the relative measure of viewer response to changes in the landscape.

Why do we study this? As a part of the National Environmental Policy Act, it is a policy goal for us to provide aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings, preserve important aspects of our national heritage and maintain an environment that supports diversity and a variety of individual choices. As was mentioned earlier, Leroy Brady from ADOT is in attendance tonight. He is someone that keeps us engineers honest by evaluating that what we are designing will also be aesthetically pleasing.

The next presenter will be Carl Petrich from HDR, who did some of the visual resource work in the technical document.

Carl Petrich: Thank you, Mike.

One of the most important aspects of visual resources that we look at are the views and visual experience both *from* and *of* the proposed road. To do this analysis, we followed the Federal Highway Administration's guidance, and generally followed FHWA's traditional approach.

To perform this study, we divided the landscape into smaller units. These units were then evaluated by identifying distinct features, key landmarks and locations or major viewpoints. The analysis was conducted by evaluating each location as it exists now versus what it would look like if the proposed South Mountain Freeway were in operation.

This slide shows the rapid change in what were once solely agricultural areas. The photo on the top right was taken from Ahwatukee Foothills and is looking south-southeast. The photo on the bottom right was taken from within Phoenix South Mountain Park/Preserve and is looking across the Gila River Indian Community toward the Sierra Estrella Mountains.

In terms of impacts during construction, there would be nothing unusual. Typical freeway construction equipment would be required—excavation equipment and materials, crane tower placement and use and temporary construction equipment such as concrete forms, panels and scaffolding.

This slide shows typical visual impacts during construction. These two photos show construction of the San Tan Freeway, where it meets US 60. The photo on the left shows some of the temporary construction equipment you would typically see being used, such as scaffolding. The photo on the right is the completed interchange with certain design elements that have incorporated. Revegetation has not yet occurred. You can see that rather than leave the concrete stark white, it has earth tones to help it blend in a little

better. In the case of the proposed South Mountain Freeway, all of the construction impacts would be temporary.

The notable visual impacts of the proposed freeway include a new system traffic interchange at Interstate 10 (Papago Freeway) and approximately 55th Avenue, new service traffic interchanges and overpasses located at major arterial crossings and cuts through the ridges of the South Mountains.

Because undeveloped and residential areas are more vulnerable to visual impacts than are commercial or industrial areas, a freeway in the Western Section could visually separate or divide communities. A freeway along the Pecos Road alignment in the Eastern Section wouldn't visually divide Ahwatukee Foothills, but instead would adjoin the northern boundary of the Gila River Indian Community. The proposed road freeway would roughly follow the alignment of an existing boundary between the two communities.

This slide shows an example of the type of interchange that would be seen as part of the South Mountain Freeway at 55th Avenue and Interstate 10 (Papago Freeway). The visual impacts would be similar to those for the existing Loop 101 (Agua Fria Freeway) and I-10 (Papago Freeway) system traffic interchange.

What you see here is an example of a typical service traffic interchange. This is typical for what is used in many parts of the Valley. The proposed freeway would generally be elevated over arterial streets at roughly 1-mile intervals, at least in the Western Section.

I understand that at a previous meeting, you were introduced to the proposed cuts in the South Mountains and that they would be severe. I won't dwell on this issue, since it has already been discussed.

These are examples of other major road cuts that have been done in the state. The photo on the left shows the cut that was made on US 93 for the Hoover Dam bypass. This is a major cut, but still under construction. The photo on the upper right shows two cuts along Pecos Road from about eight years ago, so you can see the extent of weathering since construction. These cuts are about 65 feet tall and are located on Pecos Road just west of Desert Foothills Parkway. As you know, one of the cuts for the proposed South Mountain Freeway would be several hundred feet tall. The bottom right picture shows a cut along State Route 51. The freeway was built about 20 years ago, and you can see that the cut here shows a certain amount of weathering. As you can see in this example, ADOT tried to make the slope of the cut mimic existing landforms in the area. In the case of the proposed South Mountain Freeway, ADOT would not be sure of the shape of the cuts until after geotechnical studies are completed. Issues of angle of sideslopes and the number and extent of benching would be addressed at that time.

If the project were not constructed, there obviously would be no change in the visual character and quality. However, there would be changes in the driving experience on the arterial roads that would affect visual quality.

Should the proposed South Mountain Freeway be built, there are some things that could be done to reduce or eliminate visual impacts. Vegetation could be used to screen overpasses as shown here along I-10, west of downtown. In some places, rock outcrops can be left in place rather then cutting through them so that the area doesn't look too dissimilar from the existing landscape.

You have all seen noise barriers and retaining walls that look something like this. This view is on Loop 101 near Elliot Road in the East Valley. In this example, the concrete has an earth tone to reduce contrast and help it blend in with the adjacent landscape and materials. This could also be done for overpasses and abutments—any concrete work could be eligible.

This view is southbound on State Route 51, north of Northern Avenue. This was a roadway cut that didn't sheer off cleanly. How clean roadway cuts might be would depend on local geology. In this case, ADOT addressed the issue by planting vegetation in depressed pockets in the rock to help make the cut appear more natural.

I understand you have already talked about roadway profiles for this proposed project. Even if the freeway were depressed, noise barriers would most likely be required, and these would have a visual impact. The view shown is typical of those seen along the Superstition Freeway through Tempe and Mesa or of I-10 (Papago Freeway) west of downtown. The landscape treatment of any depressed portions of the proposed freeway could look similar to what you all have experienced in driving on depressed portions of other Valley freeways.

That is a quick overview of this proposed freeway's effects on visual resources.

Tom Keller: Are there any questions?

SMCAT Member: On the proposed South Mountain Freeway, in the past you have mentioned that this highway would be above grade. Did you ever consider constructing the freeway at ground level and taking the arterials over the freeway?

Ben Spargo: We are planning on having a semi-depressed profile at Dobbins Road with the freeway 10 to 15 feet below existing ground with Dobbins Road 10 to 15 feet above existing ground. An impact of raising the arterial profile is that you change the elevation that adjacent properties need to be at to access the arterial. A major reason for constructing the proposed freeway over the arterials is that the infrastructure, including utilities and pavement are already in place. Other reasons the freeway needed to be elevated included going over the railroad, the Salt River, the conveyance channel and the canal.

Bill Vachon: There is also a high-water table in this area.

Ben Spargo: If the freeway profile were depressed, there still would be visual impacts related to noise walls and bridge crossings. In this area, we felt that it would be better to have a raised profile.

Carl Petrich: The thought process behind the decision to either raise or depress the proposed freeway would not be unique to this freeway.

SMCAT Member: On slide 24, the text states that this freeway *could* divide communities in the Western Section. Is this information only for us or is this information available for the public?

Ben Spargo: This information is available to the public.

SMCAT Member: I think the language of this statement should be changed. The freeway *will* divide communities, not *could* divide. This should be changed in every document where it is listed as such.

Ben Spargo: Some of the hedging on the wording is done because there hasn't been a final decision on whether this proposed freeway would be built.

SMCAT Member: On slide 32, you have a picture of some decorated concrete, which looks really good. I have also seen the impressive aesthetics on Loop 101 in North Scottsdale that is rather creative and impressive to view as you drive through. On the other hand, State Route 51 is hideous. There are flat cement slabs, only some of which have decoration. Recently there were people looking like cavemen with chisels that were trying to improve the aesthetics, but they ended up impeding traffic for six months. Why wasn't this completed beforehand? I would hope that this situation wouldn't happen for the South Mountain Freeway.

Leroy Brady: I would like to point out that I spent the better part of the day developing a specification so that ADOT won't have to go through that again.

SMCAT Member: I also will raise my objection that we don't want an at-grade, 20-foot noise wall. That is not a good choice either.

SMCAT Member: Near Kyrene Road and Loop 202, there is a great amount of water that has collected. I would think that it would be costing a great amount of money to pump this water to the area. Yet, you tell us that doing something like this for Laveen would be too costly. Aren't the people of Laveen worth as much?

Floyd Roerich: The water at Kyrene Road and Loop 202 is tailwater from a Salt River Project drainage channel. This is an area that should be dry when the area hasn't had any rainstorms. ADOT has been working with SRP so that this tailwater can be eliminated. Because this water is there, it has taken on a riparian environment that continues to grow.

I assure you that this water is not groundwater, but tail- and stormwater that needs to be eliminated.

Tom Keller: By the way, if you have more than one question at a time, please write them down so that others can have time to ask questions. We will come back to the questions you have written down at either the end of each question-and-answer session or the end of the meeting.

SMCAT Member: On slide 32, are the aesthetic treatments mentioned ADOT standards or would there be an additional cost to each community?

Mike Bruder: The textures are developed with input from the local community. What ADOT does is design this so that a particular theme is carried out in a large section of freeway so that the look is continuous. ADOT does have standard treatments and colors that would be at no additional cost to the community. However, treatments or colors not considered standard could come with an additional community cost.

SMCAT Member: So, what is wrong with having a riparian environment near at Kyrene Road and Loop 202?

Floyd Roehrich: There are quite a few issues with having the water there. The retention basin there was not designed to maintain a continual body of water. Having the existing water there could have impacts to the existing area groundwater. There also are issues with mosquito breeding. People downstream have rights to that water, which they are currently not receiving.

SMCAT Member: For clarification purposes, is the primary purpose of having a below-grade freeway profile to reduce the area's visual impacts?

Mike Bruder: There are various reasons for doing this. Sometimes it is done to balance earthwork.

SMCAT Member: Some stretches of freeway on the Superstition and Red Mountain freeways are below-grade. Would this have been done to reduce the negative visual impacts?

Carl Petrich: These freeways were built in existing residential communities, which were heavily urbanized areas. None of us know exactly what the reasoning was behind the decision to depress the freeway, but I imagine that visual and noise and buffering of adjacent land uses were considerations.

SMCAT Member: Well, was the purpose for depressing these stretches of roadway for noise mitigation?

Mike Bruder: Typically, depressing a freeway is not done for noise because noise walls are usually still required. A freeway profile would be depressed more to alleviate visual issues.

SMCAT Member: Could we update the photos that were shown in this presentation so that we can see how the areas currently look?

SMCAT Member: What is the current estimated budget for this proposed freeway?

Ben Spargo: I believe it is currently estimated at around $1.7 billion.

SMCAT Member: That estimate is with the freeway profile at surface level so I am thinking that a profile below-grade would greatly increase this cost?

Ben Spargo: Yes.

SMCAT Member: So can we just begin estimating the cost at $2 billion? This would take into account such things as royalties for well relocations, for example.

Ben Spargo: There already is money included in our cost estimate for contingencies such as well replacements. The cost estimate is reviewed periodically and changed based on such items as construction materials; however, these costs are all still preliminary.

Tom Keller: At this point, if you didn't get a chance to ask a question, we will need to either get back to it at the end of the meeting or place it in the parking lot issues memorandum. Thank you.

Mike Bruder: Let's shift gears. What are biological resources? Biological resources refer to living organisms found in the natural environment. Plant and wildlife communities are the foundation of biological resources and include: plant species specific to types of soils found in the area, wildlife abundance and diversity are related to amount and variety of habitat types in the area and plant and wildlife species are managed and protected through federal and state regulations.

We study biological resources because the construction and operation of a freeway could adversely affect biological communities. Also, support is growing to maintain connectivity to facilitate wildlife movement.

Kevin Grove with HDR will now discuss the specifics related to biology and the proposed South Mountain Freeway.

Kevin Grove: Hello. This information presented to you tonight was prepared from the information contained in the technical reports.

Some of the native vegetation species in the project area include: palo verde, acacia, mesquite, walnut, elder, ocotillo and brittlebush. Some cacti include: saguaro, buckhorn cholla, hedgehog cactus and barrel cactus. All the cacti and agave are protected under the Arizona Native Plant Law.

The native wildlife species common to the study area include: black-tailed jack rabbit, ground squirrel, coyote, gray fox, javelina and various species of bats. Common bird species include: curve-billed thrasher, cactus wren, turkey vulture and various species of owls, falcons and hawks.

Reptile species common in the area include the Sonoran desert tortoise and various lizards and snakes.

A project this size would have impacts to the area. Native vegetation would be removed causing a decrease in shelter, foraging and nesting resources for wildlife. Invasive plant species have the potential to be introduced through accidental import of seeds by construction equipment and through soil disturbance. The vehicles that would be using the freeway could also introduce invasive species.

No threatened or endangered species would be affected. As we go through this process, we would also be looking at the sensitive species that would be affected. Sensitive species is a category that was developed by the Arizona Game and Fish Department and looks at species that may have known or perceived threats or may have population declines in Arizona. The protection for sensitive species is less stringent than with federally listed threatened or endangered ones.

Wildlife could be displaced and their nesting/breeding seasons potentially disrupted because of construction noise and activities. In this case, displacement means that the species could move from their home range because of the disruption caused by construction activities or louder noises related to construction or operation of the freeway in the area.

If the project were not constructed, no project-specific impacts would be experienced, especially in protected areas, such as the Phoenix South Mountain Park/Preserve. However, it is anticipated that projected urban growth would continue in the area. This would create an increase in local street traffic and congestion. Because of the continued urban growth, biological resources would continue to be displaced.

There are some things that ADOT could do to reduce or eliminate these impacts. Plants could be salvaged and replanted in the project area. This is a standard ADOT practice. Often when some plants are removed in a construction project such as this, they are taken to a nursery until it is time to plant them in the study area. Soils could be seeded with species native to the area. To remove the chances of invasive species being introduced to the area, construction equipment would be washed prior to entering the construction site. Prior to the construction vehicles leaving the construction site, vegetation would be

removed. Certain construction activities could also be scheduled outside of prime nesting and breeding seasons for sensitive species.

There are other things that could be done to reduce or eliminate impacts. Fencing could be used to reduce wildlife access to the proposed freeway. Construction activities could be reduced to the minimum area necessary so that natural vegetation could be maintained, where possible. Construction noise would be controlled in accordance with ADOT standard specifications. Also, project activities would be coordinated with the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

One example of a way to reduce biological impacts is to construct wildlife crossings. The photo on the left is a terrestrial crossing used by coyotes and javelina. The photo on the right is a multiuse path designed for human and elk use. Pedestrians use the path during the day while the elk use it at night to get to their resources. The project team has identified four potential areas where multiuse crossings could be used by humans and/or wildlife to travel under the proposed freeway corridor.

Are there any questions?

SMCAT Member: I have a comment. I went back and reviewed SMCAT material from years ago. Back then, we asked ADOT for a certain amount of information regarding biological issues. It seems that tonight the same material was presented to us that was presented a few years back, which does not address our need for more information regarding this issue. There have been many independent studies on biological resources in the South Mountains. Arizona State University has conducted many studies on its own. It just seems that the information contained in the technical reports downplays the issue. It seems to me that the biological issue is being reduced so that more drainage culverts can be used so that ADOT can save millions of dollars rather than spend the money on mitigation for biological resources. This issue could come out during a lawsuit.

I am concerned about the whole direction of the information that is being presented to us. We are getting no opportunity to comment on the information.

SMCAT Member: On page 5 of the draft biological resources technical summary report, the text states that a possible measure would be to replace some parkland that would be taken by ADOT for the freeway, but not necessarily used. I am wondering about this because I think there is a need for more open space. The last estimate I heard was that it costs about $100,000 to preserve one acre of undeveloped desert land. I heard we need 300 acres of parkland. How serious are you about replacing some of this land?

Mike Bruder: The amount of land that we are talking about here would be about 30 acres. As ADOT goes through the right-of-way acquisition process, we will see which parcels would be adjacent to the park. We would then look at exchanging some of the property in these areas to preserve more of the park. The exchange of land in this manner would probably not always be at a one to one rate.

SMCAT Member: What would be the conditions of those properties?

Mike Bruder: It depends on the location of each property. In some cases, it would be pristine desert. In other cases, the land may already have some development.

SMCAT Member: I commend you on your creativity for finding mitigation for wildlife issues. How did you determine where the four multiuse crossings would go? Did you study the way the animals move or will you just be putting signs up directing the animals to the nearest crossing? Maybe it will end up being a survival of the fittest. The freeway vehicles will hit the dumb animals and the smarter ones will survive.

I would think that the animals would be headed towards the areas that might have a source of water. They aren't going to go the places that you have designated for them when the water is the other direction. Also, I don't see any multiuse crossings in the Laveen portion of the study. In fact, I don't remember seeing any of this when we studied this issue three years ago.

Justin White: The introduction of wildlife crossings in ADOT projects is relatively new. The most important thing is to get them in the designs and study how wildlife will be using these features. We start with these studies and then coordinate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to identify the species that would probably be using the crossings. We are trying to place the wildlife crossings in areas that are near current wildlife corridors. But we will continue to monitor and research these crossings even after they are in place.

SMCAT Member: How can you adequately analyze the wildlife impacts if you haven't looked where the wildlife corridors are?

Justin White: We generally begin with the threatened and endangered species. After that, we look at the sensitive species. We then come up with a baseline using wildlife corridor data provided by the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

Kevin Grove: Based on the threatened and endangered species status, the Gila River is a potential wildlife corridor identified within the South Mountains that is considered a fracture zone because of the development that has encroached the area.

Sometimes, you can predict the type of wildlife that may use or even get wildlife to use these corridors.

Tom Keller: We are 10 minutes ahead of schedule. We can take the break now or continue answering questions. Is there a preference?

SMCAT Member: Keep answering questions.

SMCAT Member: I was wondering about the landscaping involved in the project. You spend a great amount of money on the landscaping for these freeways and when you widen the freeway after a few years, the landscaping is the first thing to be removed. Why do you spend so much money on the landscaping when it is removed eventually?

Mike Bruder: The way we are approaching the proposed South Mountain Freeway is different than how we have done in the past. The future widening of this freeway would be done entirely in the median. This way the landscaping that would be done on the outside of the freeway would remain in place.

SMCAT Member: How tall would the retaining walls be?

Ben Spargo: The noise walls would be approximately 14–20 feet high.

SMCAT Member: I have a question regarding the visual resources related to the South Mountain Park. How would the current trail system be affected visually by the construction and operation of the proposed South Mountain Freeway?

Carl Petrich: We did look at how the Phoenix South Mountain Park/Preserve trail system would be affected by the proposed freeway. The only trails that would be visually impacted are the trails on the far western end of the park. Those are the trails that are not frequented as much. The proposed freeway would be quite a ways away from all the trails that are located in the central and eastern section of the park, making it difficult to see. When looking at the visual resources, we don't necessarily measure the miles that are between one point to the proposed freeway, but rather what the impacts of the proposed freeway would be at that location.

Ben Spargo: Are you concerned about the physical taking of trails?

SMCAT Member: No, I am concerned about the visual aspects.

SMCAT Member: How would the E1 Alternative affect visual resources? Would this be similar to the Superstition and Red Mountain freeways?

Carl Petrich: I evaluated some of the visual impacts to Pecos Road as viewed from Chandler Boulevard. From the proposed road, you could see Pecos Road, but it is quite far in the distance. A freeway along the Pecos Road alignment would not be highly elevated, so visual impacts would be much greater for someone looking at the proposed freeway, nearby. And then intervening structures (roofs and houses) would block much of the view because of the relative low profile of the proposed freeway.

SMCAT Member: I understand that. My assumption is the visual impacts that drove the other freeways below grade since noise is not a consideration. So why wouldn't the E1 Alternative be designed below-grade?

Carl Petrich: More land would be required for this alternative to be below-grade, which could require more people losing homes. I believe this additional land issue was discussed at the last SMCAT meeting.

SMCAT Member: Is this the reason why it wouldn't be constructed below-grade?

Carl Petrich: This is one of the major reasons.

Ben Spargo: The whole EIS process involves weighing decisions against each other. We had to evaluate the additional impacts that would occur if the freeway were constructed at varying elevations.

Carl Petrich: A depressed freeway doesn't eliminate all of the visual impacts. Where necessary, noise barriers would be required, which would stick up above ground level.

Ben Spargo: Another issue would be that you would also slightly elevate the arterial streets that the freeway would pass beneath, which would be a visual impact.

SMCAT Member: In terms of biology, it seems there were some negative impacts for animals that were not discussed. Light pollution can disrupt normal animal activities. How is the project team addressing this issue?

Kevin Grove: That's a good question.

Carl Petrich: From the visual resources perspective, lights would be directed straight down so that the area that would be illuminated would be only that area necessary to see. Luminaires—the football-shaped things at the top of light poles, that are the actual lights themselves—would be those current with the state-of-the art in the industry at the time of construction. The idea is to minimize light scatter.

Justin White: Are you talking about light pollution from the roadway lighting?

SMCAT Member: I am talking about the light pollution that would be caused by this proposed freeway into an ecologically sensitive area.

Justin White: So the assumption is that this light pollution would affect certain species?

SMCAT Member: This is not an assumption, it has been documented.

Justin White: To my knowledge, this issue hasn't been evaluated as a part of this project.

Mike Bruder: In regards to freeway lighting, there are certain standards and guidelines that ADOT needs to follow so that the driving public can see their exit properly.

Timothy Tait: It will be a balance between biological issues and driver safety. ADOT will need to make a decision on what will be the best context sensitive solution. It is a good example that you brought forth, but there are certain things that would be addressed as part of the design process.

SMCAT Member: My concern is that ADOT recognizes that there are more impacts to animal species than just habitat destruction. I urge ADOT to consider the issue of light pollution and its affect on animals to be considered as a part of the study.

Tom Keller: We are now five minutes into our scheduled break time. Let's resume at 7:35 p.m.

Break

Tom Keller: Can we begin? Please take your seats and we can get started.

I have handed out a session feedback form to each member of the SMCAT. Please complete the forms and hand them to Joy Butler. By taking the time to complete this form, it allows us to make these meetings better for you month to month.

We also have blue question cards that can be completed by the public. These questions will be addressed at the end of the meeting.

Are we all set Mike?

Mike Bruder: Yes. I am all ready to go.

The third meeting topic is land use. Land use planning involves zoning, development plans, land ownership and future area planning. Common land uses in the Study Area include residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, open space, public/quasi-public and transportation. This pretty much covers the whole gamut.

Why do we study land use? Land uses in the path of the proposed freeway would be converted primarily to a transportation use. Some land uses may benefit and others may experience negative effects because of their proximity to a freeway.

With that, Pat Higgins with HDR will discuss the land use specifics related to the proposed South Mountain Freeway.

Pat Higgins: Thank you very much.

We determine the land use impacts from a highway project in the amount of land that would be changed. The following chart shows the percentage of the existing and zoned land within the Study Area, as it relates to agricultural, residential and commercial and industrial. Note the change in agricultural and residential from existing to zoned lands.

The proposed South Mountain Freeway intersects three City of Phoenix Village Planning areas: Estrella, Laveen, and Ahwatukee Foothills. The next three slides show the maps for each of these Village Planning areas. The maps are from the City of Phoenix General Plan, dated January 2008. On each map, the proposed South Mountain Freeway is represented by the dashed line. In all three of these maps, it shows how the planning is there to accommodate the proposed freeway.

Some of the impacts of the project are displacement of land that would be used for the transportation facility. This slide shows that the total amount of acres for the W55 and E1 alternatives that would be needed for the proposed roadway would be 1,691 acres.

The location of the freeway may change the desired land use of properties near the freeway. These changes would be seen more in the currently undeveloped areas. The changes to planned land uses may be required to maximize the benefits of a new freeway. It is safe to speculate that commercial centers would be at or near the proposed traffic interchanges. Also, emergency services would also be located near the proposed freeway to give them faster community access.

Other project impacts would include temporary construction-related impacts include detours and noise.

If the project were not constructed, the existing street network would need to be improved based on traffic demand and development. It is possible that the power centers on each of the existing land use maps would change since there would not be a transportation corridor to center this development. In fact, no major project-related influence on land use would be anticipated. Existing ADOT right-of-way that has already been secured for this proposed freeway corridor could be resold.

By not constructing this freeway, land uses planned around previously proposed alignments could change to adapt to different land use expectations. It is possible that the conversion of existing agricultural and undeveloped land to residential, commercial and industrial uses would continue.

The project team has coordinated with the city planners and local developers during the study process so that the land use needs closest to the proposed freeway would be the needs that are more beneficial and compatible.

The impacts of this proposed freeway could be reduced or eliminated by controlling the noise, dust and emissions of the equipment during construction. Also, a detailed traffic control plan could be developed so that access would be maintained during construction, traffic would only be disrupted during off-peak times and the public would be given advance notice of traffic restrictions. It is possible that open space buffers would be used between the freeway and adjacent land uses to reduce noise levels when the freeway

would be in operation. The use of noise walls would also mitigate higher freeway traffic noise levels.

Tom Keller: Questions?

SMCAT Member: The land use maps show the planning for the City of Phoenix. The South Mountain Freeway Study Area also borders the Gila River Indian Community. The impacts from land use planning in this area are not accounted for.

Secondly, ADOT seems to be skipping over the questions brought up in the first set of SMCAT meetings several years ago. There is a whole section of land, the north and south ridges, that will be impacted by this project. This is all private land in this area, which I have questioned before. The only egress and ingress from this land is through the GRIC and the way we have seen freeway planning in the past, it isn't difficult to think that these people could end up being landlocked. What is going on here?

Ben Spargo: The area you are talking about is addressed in the City of Phoenix Ahwatukee Village Planning area. The access issues could be addressed with the multiuse crossings shown in the presentation. It would depend on the final design and what type of access is needed.

SMCAT Member: Part of the problem is that I don't think the access would be wide enough to accommodate vehicles and I don't think the residents of the area would have legal access when entering tribal land. I brought this issue up before and it seems like the project team is still going around in circles.

Ben Spargo: We have tried to accommodate some areas for the community to have access, but because much of this is private land, the ADOT Right-of-Way Group will need to work with the area land owners before we have a resolution. ADOT will evaluate the cost of acquiring the land versus providing legal access.

SMCAT Member: On slide 59, I have a question regarding the issue of what if the project were not constructed. The Maricopa Association of Governments has developed a regional plan, which includes the proposed South Mountain Freeway. What are the impacts to the regional freeway system if this freeway is not constructed?

Ben Spargo: This question will be addressed in the parking lot issues memorandum.

SMCAT Member: On slide 62, the text mentions that dust, noise and emissions during construction will be controlled. There is a school in my community that is 60 feet away from the Pecos Road alignment. How will dust and emissions be controlled so that it won't affect the children at the school? I am surprised that we haven't heard anything from the Kyrene Elementary District regarding this.

SMCAT Member: You can ask me directly.

SMCAT Member: I would like to hear what is being done for a specific group of children. There are five schools within a stones throw of the Pecos Road alignment. In fact, one school is about as close to the alignment as from here to that wall on the other side of the room. Can the Kyrene Elementary District give us a statement regarding this?

SMCAT Member: I am not sure about the mitigation efforts that ADOT would be planning.

SMCAT Member: I just would like a statement.

SMCAT Member: I appreciate that.

SMCAT Member: You talked that the ADOT Right-of-Way Group would need to coordinate with developers regarding access near the GRIC. When did the Right-of-Way Group become involved?

Mike Bruder: The Right-of-Way Group started purchasing some properties in the 1980s. At that time, they purchased some properties in Ahwatukee and some in the Western portion of the Study Area.

CAT Member: Have they been buying much recently?

Mike Bruder: Most of the recent purchases have been due to property owner hardship.

SMCAT Member: These purchases have been recent?

Mike Bruder: Some of these purchases were completed in the last two to three years.

Ben Spargo: The land between Pecos Road and existing development is predominantly owned by ADOT. I have that information available, if necessary. More recently, there have also been some purchases of industrial properties, which where considered protective buys.

Mike Bruder: There is limited funding for right-of-way acquisition at this time so the purchasing has been limited to those property owners who have hardship cases.

SMCAT Member: I know that when you built the Loop 202 at Greenfield Road, the freeway roadway was swung out during construction so that traffic could continue moving smoothly. Along Pecos Road, you do not have this freedom. Is your plan to close Pecos Road during construction of the proposed South Mountain Freeway?

Ben Spargo: In a future SMCAT presentation, the project team will be discussing the implementation planning should the South Mountain Freeway be constructed. That question will be addressed at that time.

SMCAT Member: Okay.

Mike Bruder: The freeway would be in a rather wide swath of land. I think Pecos Road would be reconstructed prior to construction of the South Mountain Freeway.

SMCAT Member: When you look at the potential land use impacts, there doesn't appear to be many issues since the cities have incorporated the proposed freeway into their general plans and have already adjusted accordingly.

Mike Bruder: It has been in many of the cities general plans for quite some time now.

SMCAT Member: So the City of Phoenix 2007 General Plan already had the proposed South Mountain Freeway designation on their maps?

Ben Spargo: Yes, the proposed South Mountain Freeway has been in the cities general plans for awhile.

SMCAT Member: Are mountain lions federally endangered? This animal is not listed in the information that you provided. I know that they have been seen in this area.

Justin White: Mountain lions are not an endangered, threatened or sensitive species.

SMCAT Member: So mountain lions could be road kill and no one would care.

Kevin Grove: In the technical report summary, it mentions that there have been sightings of mountain lions in the area.

SMCAT Member: I know they have found their scat in the area.

Justin White: Mountain lions have a large range. They could be seen in a particular wildlife corridor at one time and not seen there again for awhile. I know they are not on the federal list of endangered or threatened species, but I am not sure about the state list.

Tom Keller: We have a number of questions from the public. Is there anyone who would like to read their own questions?

No response

Public Written Question: Will someone explain why the director of ADOT, Mr. Victor Mendez, has time to play April fools jokes with a radio station about charging tolls for the freeways and yet he can not schedule time to come to a SMCAT meeting?

Timothy Tait: Victor Mendez had zero involvement in the KTAR radio station April Fools Day prank. He has been notified of the request to attend a SMCAT meeting and so he knows that the invite is there.

Public Written Question: What percentage of the DEIS has been reviewed by the various internal agencies and what is its projected release date for public review and comments?

Ben Spargo: I will answer the first part of that question. One hundred percent of the Draft EIS has been reviewed by ADOT and FHWA. I will defer the second part of your question to Tim.

Timothy Tait: We don't know when the Draft EIS will be ready for public review and comment. There is still an outstanding issue regarding Traditional Cultural Properties and the Gila River Indian Community. Following that, the Draft EIS will need to be reviewed by FHWA's legal sufficiency group and we are not sure what time will be required for that. After the legal sufficiency review, we will have clearance to release the Draft EIS for public review. I do not expect the Draft EIS to be released in 2008.

Public Written Question: In 2006, Senator Huppenthal held several meetings with concerned citizens on the proposed South Mountain Freeway. In those meetings, Mr. Mendez was present, along with selected staff members and on a question regarding the 45-day public review period for the DEIS. He indicated that it might be extended. Has a decision been reached on that issue?

Timothy Tait: A final decision has not been reached on this; however the sentiment remains true. The review period would be a minimum 45 days review period. The actual review time would most likely be longer than this.

Public Written Question: If it were decided to build the freeway today, when would the project start? How long would it take to reach the east route? When would it be complete?

Mike Bruder: If ADOT received a Record of Decision today, it would take between 12 and 18 months for the preliminary design to be developed. An implementation plan would break down the corridor into construction phases that would designate which portions of the freeway would be constructed first and last. The final design for the freeway would last about a year. All in all, I would think that it would be about two and a half years before construction would begin. This timing could also depend on the property acquisitions.

Ben Spargo: The total construction time for this proposed freeway would be five to six years.

Timothy Tait: Right-of-way funding for this corridor is available in 2010. The construction funding was designated by MAG to be available in 2012.

Public Written Question: When talking about increased traffic on surface streets if the freeway is not built, is this primarily on the west end? Ahwatukee appears to be land locked. How much future growth is anticipated for this community? It seems the current road system is sufficient for this community.

Ben Spargo: The traffic volume would increase naturally as more development occurs in the Study Area. There is more planned development in the Western Section so volumes would most likely increase more in that area. The only major developable land in the Eastern Section is the State Land parcel. Depending on the future development plan, traffic could be expected to increase on Pecos Road and Chandler Boulevard once the area is built out.

Public Written Question: How will the adjacent homes, schools and businesses be affected during the destruction of homes and freeway construction (noise, dust, air, traffic, etc.)?

Ben Spargo: ADOT would develop a plan to address these concerns prior to the start of construction.

Timothy Tait: That broad question is covering many of the topics that the SMCAT is studying–any of these issues could have impacts on the community. You will be able to find out some of this information by attending future SMCAT meetings or accessing information from the project Web site.

Ben Spargo: ADOT would also be looking at the Best Management Practices for this potential project. They would be visiting the construction sites on a daily basis. ADOT would evaluate any issues that arise and figure out ways to prevent these issues from occurring in the future. If we have time, we can bring someone in to discuss Best Management Practices with you.

Mike Bruder: Yes, this goes back to the Best Management Practices. One such item as a part of this process is testing for lead based paint. By doing this, ADOT wants to ensure that all bases are covered and that items like this will not be an issue in construction.

Tom Keller: Okay, here is the final question.

Public Written Question: What is envisioned for the visual effects in the area of Lagos Elementary School?

Ben Spargo: Visual affects for this section would include noise walls that would also act as a visual screen. The noise walls would be painted with a desert color to help it blend

into the surrounding environment and would also be treated with a texture to make it more visually appealing.

Public Question: What about the other side of the wall that is not facing the freeway?

Ben Spargo: The color and texture would be on both sides of the noise wall.

Tom Keller: Is there a motion for adjournment?

SMCAT Member: Motion.

Tom Keller: Second?

SMCAT Member: I second the motion.

Tom Keller: The meeting is adjourned.

Meeting ended at 8:15 p.m.