



South Mountain Corridor Study
Citizens Advisory Team, December 2, 2004
Draft Summary

Date: December 2, 2004
Time: 5:30 p.m.
Location: GRIC District 6 Komatke Center – Learning Center Meeting Hall

Attendees

Rock Argabright, Ahwatukee Foothills Village Planning Committee
 Kris Black, Ahwatukee Foothills HOA
 Steve Boschen, Valley Forward
 Chad Campbell, Sierra Club
 Peggy Eastburn, Estrella Village Planning Committee
 Michael Goodman, Phx Mtns Preservation Council
 Don Jones, Southwest Valley Chamber of Commerce

Robert Moss, United Arizona Dairymen
 Wayne Nelson, GRIC District 7
 Nathaniel Percharo, I-10 Pecos Landowners
 Barbara Schneider, South Mountain Village
 Julia Shepherd, City of Tolleson
 Jim Strogon, Kyrene Lagos Elementary School
 Mary Thomas, Gila River Indian Community
 Dave Williams, Knight Transportation/AMTA

Staff and Consultants Attending

Kevin Biesty, ADOT
 Michael Bruder, ADOT
 Matt Burdick, ADOT
 Kelly Cairo, GRA
 Chris Clary-Lemon, HDR
 Amy Edwards, HDR
 Theresa Gunn, GCI

Bill Hayden, ADOT
 Dan Lance, ADOT
 Larry Lindner, ADOT
 John Roberts, GRIC
 Ben Spargo, HDR
 Bill Vachon, FHWA
 Shannon Wilhelmsen, ADOT

Special Guests

Carl Antone, Department of Economic Development, GRIC

Citizens

Danny Bouting
 David Folts
 David Hivarez
 Jim Koci
 Larry Lee
 Brian Madson
 Albert Pablo
 Ben Patton
 Lisa Percharo

Lawrence Enos
 Ramey Pern
 Reed J. Petersen
 Paul Pickett
 Bill Ramsay
 Christopher Silk, Sr.
 Dale Wiltsie

Meeting Summary: Kelly Cairo, GCI

ACTION PLAN

Task/Activity	Who	When
Provide staff list to CAT members	Theresa	Next CAT meeting
Check on Sierra Club's interest in having a South Mountain presentation at an upcoming meeting	Chad Campbell	Next CAT meeting
Check on the Trucking Association's interest in having a South Mountain presentation at an upcoming meeting	Dave Williams	Next CAT meeting
Discuss delaying Ahwatukee Chamber of Commerce meeting with Rock Argabright.	Amy	December 3
Respond to questions regarding Pecos Road traffic figures and intersections.	Amy	Next CAT meeting
Respond to question: What is the total number of vehicles – commercial and private passenger – expressed as a percentage of the total number of vehicles on Maricopa County Freeways, that the South Mountain Freeway is expected to carry per day?	Amy	Next CAT meeting
Respond to comment: I would like to see figures including private areas.	Amy	Next CAT meeting

Welcome and Introductions

Theresa Gunn welcomed attendees to the meeting and provided a brief background on the formation of the South Mountain Citizen's Advisory Team (CAT). She explained that comments from public attendees would be accepted in writing, and if possible, responses would be provided at the conclusion of the meeting. Gunn reviewed the agenda and called for questions concerning the agenda. CAT members introduced themselves.

Project Status

Shannon Wilhelmsen provided a public involvement update. She asked the CAT to consider entities with whom the project team should meet and reviewed the schedule of upcoming group meetings. Suggestions for additional groups included:

- Kyrene school district
- Gila River corporations (first Saturday of each month)
- New subdivisions in Laveen area
- Sierra Club
- Trucking Association

Amy Edwards provided the planning/technical update. She also introduced the new project manager, Mike Bruder. Highlights of the presentation included:

- Footprints of impact areas for the westside alternatives and Pecos Road will be presented when the information is available.
- The December 2004 mapping information will be available in 2005.

Regional Transportation Plan Update

Bill Hayden updated the CAT on the Regional Transportation Plan. The remaining segments of the regional freeway system, as passed in 1985 through Proposition 300, will be complete by 2007. Proposition 400 was approved by more than 57 percent of voters this year. This proposition differs in that it is a multi-modal system. The program includes four five-year phases. Hayden reviewed the draft plan, including:

- Sometime in the 2020's, the population will double.
- Use of bonding to accelerating funding and cover the gap in funds in 2006.
- 303 Loop to Avondale Road.
- Moving forward on right-of-way acquisition.
- 50 miles of new studies for new corridors.

CAT Member Questions/Comments:

Question: What will be added to existing freeways? **Response:** General purpose and HOV lanes.

Question: What about connections from the Phoenix-area to other counties, and connecting to other freeway systems? **Response:** We have seen profound growth in the Casa Grande area recently. We need to start planning now how this will connect, as a state department.

Comment: Pinal County is talking about imposing a similar tax.

Question: In funding the 303, will there also be a widening of I-10 leading up to that connection? **Response:** There will be an upcoming study; however it is not planned for the first five years.

Question: What about rubberized asphalt? **Response:** This protects and preserves the concrete base. One of the net results of the study is to determine how long it will last. We will be interested to see what impact heavy truck traffic will have on compressing the surface.

Question: Why isn't there a very aggressive plan regarding rubberized asphalt? **Response:** This is actually a very aggressive plan. We are limited by the narrow window of time when temperatures are in the appropriate range to lay the asphalt.

Question: What about widening I-10? **Response:** There will be a study from Loop 202 to Casa Grande, and eventually to Tucson.

Question: What about GRIC community land for I-10 widening? **Response:** We have been working with the community for about 1 ½ years, and hope to have a decision on this soon.

Project Updates

Amy Edwards reviewed project updates. A special team is looking at requirements through the NEPA process to address the Economic Analysis Impact Study. There will be meetings with local jurisdictions. Public involvement is a component of this process.

Traffic microsimulations are progressing using two software packages to analyze what happens to traffic on the westside for the three alternatives. In March/April of 2005 models will be available.

Comment: There have been problems on Pecos with speeding. Traffic lights were added only after accidents occurred. **Response:** These models will only look at traffic operations at sections along I-10. There is also a difference with this type of connection – freeway compared to city streets. However, we do need to evaluate the safety aspect.

Edwards also reviewed the Draft EIS Status. Per federal stipulation, a freeway must begin and end at logical termini. There are several options for moving forward with study, including:

Option 1 – Define a preferred alternative on the westside. Cite that due to ongoing coordination with GRIC, can study Pecos Road, a no-build option, and show a stipulation pending. This provides more certainty regarding the status of the study. If GRIC provides an option, a supplemental EIS can be issued. While this option delays the final decision, it provides greater certainty on the westside.

Option 2 – Wait to issue one document until a decision about a GRIC option is made.

Option 3 – If there will not be a GRIC alternative, move to the three westside alternatives. Eastside alternatives would be similar to those noted in Option 1.

Option 4 – Abandon the study completely and begin a new study with logical termini.

In spring 2005, ADOT will make a determination to either publish or continue to wait to produce a Draft EIS. A Draft EIS undergoes an agency review process of approximately six months. If a draft is issued at that time, a final record of decision would occur sometime in 2007, followed by an approximately two-year design process, with 2009 as the earliest possible construction date.

CAT Member Questions/Comments:

Comment: Prop 400 funding becomes available in 2009. The study is not delaying construction.

Question: How would it be built out? **Response:** That would be determined during design

Question: How long will it take? **Response:** Total construction using traditional methods would take 10-12 years. If construction begins in 2009, completion would occur sometime between 2020 and 2025.

Question: What does “no preference” mean regarding the eastside? **Response:** This means that no-build is an option for the entire corridor. We can show a westside preference; plus information regarding no-build, Pecos Road, and waiting for a GRIC alternative.

Question: Can we say “Pecos Road is not an alternative”? **Response:** Pecos Road will remain an alternative throughout the study.

Question: If Pecos Road makes no sense, can we remove it? **Response:** It’s hard to say what “makes no sense” means, especially early on.

Comment: If we make a westside determination, it will look like there are plans to build. **Response:** We would have to be very clear that this is the westside preference, but that no-build is still an option.

Comment: This will be a serious problem, and should be determined first. The westside will want a freeway; the eastside won’t. I would believe a freeway was going in if a westside preference is shown. **Response:** We are also concerned about this perception, which is why we are discussing it with the CAT tonight.

Question: Is Riggs Road a possible option? **Response:** The community has asked us not to include Riggs in the study area.

Comment: If we say Pecos doesn’t make sense, there is no reason to continue the study unless GRIC provides an option. **Response:** We must wait for a record of decision. That is why we have this geographical cross-section represented.

Comment: We are talking about the freeway stopping at I-10 on the eastside. However, there will be pressure from eastside commuters to continue this section.

Comment: Chandler and Gilbert are interested in this facility. **Response:** Part of the purpose and need is to address regional need.

West Side Alternatives – Design Considerations Update

Chris Clary-Lemon summarized information provided at the previous CAT meeting and updated the CAT on additional design considerations. Highlights included:

- The study area now includes narrow sections that could be impacted. This does not imply new right-of-way, rather, areas that are being looked at for impacts.

- Some right-of-way may be needed along I-10.
- Additional right-of-way would be needed in the 202/101/I-10 area if this option is selected.
- Naming conventions have been updated. For example W55E means the westside alternative in the 55th Avenue area, which is the easternmost option. The center and western options are designated with “C” and “W,” respectively. Further the W101W options include the designation “FR” for full reconstruction of the I-10/101 interchange and “PR” for partial reconstruction.
- There are nine alternatives shown in the key, however, some appear on top of each other on the map.
- If a freeway addresses a road at a skew, a larger area is required for study.
- Two-lane entrance ramps are planned; however less area will be needed if only one-lane is deemed necessary.
- Right-of-way is shown for study purposes only.

CAT Member Questions/Comments:

Question: Is the same amount of distance needed if the freeway is elevated or depressed? **Response:** The assumption is that the freeway would be at or above ground level. If it is depressed, the shapes may be different. Approximately 250 feet is needed at grade, and about 300-350 feet if elevated or depressed.

Question: Regarding the three westside connecting points, is the cost of connection to I-10 a factor? **Response:** Cost is one factor considered in the EIS and we will have that information. L101 west of I-10 will have to be improved if the 101 option is selected. However, the least expensive alternative is not mandated as the selected alternative. Unless there are magnitudes of difference in cost, this is not usually the deciding factor.

Question: Is there any right-of-way owned along the 55th Avenue option? **Response:** Because this alternative has been on the books since 1988, there is some right-of-way owned along both 55th Avenue and Pecos Road. However, this may not be taken into account during the study.

Preview Community Organization Presentation

Theresa Gunn reported that it has been about one year since the last public meetings. The next meetings will occur at the next milestone. In the meantime, representatives will meet with community groups. Matt Burdick and Kevin Biesty will meet with these groups and provided a preview of the draft presentation. Burdick requested comments to the presentation.

CAT Member Questions/Comments:

Comment: When the eastside groups see only one eastside alternative along Pecos, this will be an issue.

Comment: Define “service interchange,” and “system interchange.” **Response:** These definitions refer to a freeway to local street connection, and freeway to freeway connection, respectively.

Comment: May want to show the “eastside connect” slide prior to the alternatives slide.

Question: Why can't you show the interchanges for Pecos? **Response:** We don't have that information yet. We will have a draft at the end of this week. This can be added to the presentation.

Comment: A 48th Street connection would be different at Pecos compared to GRIC land.

Question: Were there traffic numbers for the Broadway curve? **Response:** Yes, this will be emphasized more for westside presentations.

Question: Are there traffic numbers for Pecos? **Response:** This graphic shows only a representation, but we have these numbers as well.

Comment: We will need a big caveat that we haven't worked with jurisdictions on these interchanges.

Comment: When Pecos was originally chosen, ADOT showed interchanges -- show these to us. **Response:** In selection of interchanges, we must make sure traffic would use the location. Also, since the general plan in 1988, there have been changes in development in the Ahwatukee area.

Comment: When you show a footprint, it looks as if a determination has been made.

Comment: Want to see a footprint for Pecos with interchanges. If the path was on GRIC land, it would be parallel and would use the same intersections.

Comment: When information comes out, it will need a lot of caveats.

Comment: Right now, we have nothing. We need some information about Pecos. **Response:** We are reluctant to provide interchanges because these have not been brought to the communities yet.

Comment: It may be too soon to conduct public meetings. We may want to meet with cities first, and then release all of the information.

Comment: After two years, you have to show something.

Comment: Don't come to us with the same information.

Comment: The Tribe has had previous problems with the City of Phoenix regarding 48th Street. The city doesn't tell us what their plans are, and we are cautious about use of our land. Now there is a park at 48th Street, and we are not being allowed to tunnel under it at our own expense.

Question: Can someone build on theoretical right-of-way up to the time of purchase by ADOT? **Response:** Cities and counties do coordinate with ADOT by requesting comments on development plans. However, theoretical right-of-way may be purchased and built upon up to the minute land is purchased.

Comment: Should change presentation language to, “Until a build alternative is selected, right-of-way cannot be purchased. Based on the previous study, right-of-way was purchased in the past.”

Comment: Add to “Corridor Development Steps” slide...”If a build alternative is selected...” Also, a larger font is needed on this slide.

Gunn requested feedback on the comment form. Two forms were received suggesting minor language changes. One SMCAT member commented about an eastside connection, “There may be bottlenecks at the connections approaching I-10, Santan East/West, Maricopa Interchange I-10 itself.”

Respond to Written Comments/Questions

Edwards noted that all questions received will be addressed in the EIS. A copy of Gila River Indian Community Resolution GR-126-00 was submitted by Christopher Silk, Sr., which states that the “Community Council strongly opposed the development plans by ADOT, MCDOT, and MAG for a truck bypass route or any future bypass plans for the proposed South Mountain Parkway across Community lands.”

Public Questions and Comments included:

- Larry Lee, Phoenix. **Question:** Is there a study to show us the crime statistics? **Response:** This is not traditionally studied in an EIS. However, this comment will be taken under consideration by the study team.
- Larry Lee, Phoenix. **Question:** Is there any thought to making use of light rail along the Pecos route? **Response:** Light rail corridors are identified by MAG and Valley Metro. Currently I-10 west is the only corridor being pursued.
- Larry Lee, Phoenix. **Question:** I heard Pecos has already been selected by ADOT. **Response:** This is not true.
- David Folts, Ahwatukee. **Question:** Is it possible to use South Mountain as a secondary route to Canamex? **Response:** SR85 to US93 is under study as the canamex.
- David Folts, Ahwatukee. **Question:** What percentage of commercial traffic would use South Mountain as a bypass? **Response:** Initial analysis shows about 10 percent, which is comparable to many current Valley freeways. We will continue to look at this issue and the information will be brought to this group.
- David Folts, Ahwatukee. **Question:** How many vehicles per minute can we expect? **Response:** The original projection was about 150,000 vehicles per day, and now we are looking at about 170,000. Peak hours are usually at about 10 percent of that figure.
- David Folts, Ahwatukee. **Question:** How many acres of South Mountain Park will be taken? **Response:** The original study showed 40-50 acres.

- David Folts, Ahwatukee. **Question:** What approvals would be needed to build a highway through South Mountain Park? Have any already given their approval? **Response:** FHWA would have to approve a 4(f). There would be many agencies involved including EPA and the Department of the Interior.
- Bill Ramsay, Phoenix. **Question:** What is the total number of vehicles – commercial and private passenger – expressed as a percentage of the total number of vehicles on Maricopa County Freeways, that the South Mountain Freeway is expected to carry per day? **Response:** I don't know. We will get back to you on this question.
- David Folts, Ahwatukee. **Question:** How many feet wide will South Mountain Loop be including on and off ramps. **Response:** 800 feet is typical; 1800 feet if the area is skewed.
- David Folts, Ahwatukee. **Question:** Will air quality improve, get worse, or stay the same within a half-mile of the freeway? **Response:** Air quality will be analyzed in the EIS.

Next Meeting

January 27, 2005 – GRIC District 6 Komatke Center – Learning Center Meeting Hall