



**INITIAL FEASIBILITY REPORT**  
**FOR THE**  
**US 93**  
**WICKENBURG ULTIMATE BYPASS PROJECT**  
**TRACS No. 093 YV 161 H 4871 01 L**



October 2003

Prepared for:

**ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF  
TRANSPORTATION**  
205 South 17th Avenue  
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Prepared by:

**JACOBS CIVIL Inc.**  
875 West Elliot Road, Suite 201  
Tempe, Arizona 85284



Engineers and Constructors



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## INTRODUCTION

Jacobs Civil Inc. is currently under contract with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) to conduct a Location/Design Concept Study regarding future improvements to US 93 from State Route (SR) 74 south of Wickenburg, extending north to the Santa Maria River (Figure 1-1). The study consists of three interrelated elements: the widening of US 93 north of Wickenburg to the Santa Maria River; a US 93 bypass around Wickenburg; and an interim improvement project in downtown Wickenburg to relieve traffic congestion and improve safety in the short term until the ultimate US 93 Wickenburg Bypass can be funded and constructed.

This Wickenburg Bypass Feasibility Report presents the results of an investigation of alternative transportation/route corridors appropriate for the Wickenburg Bypass. The information and recommendations contained herein will be used in advancing the bypass study to the Design Concept Report (DCR) and Environmental Documentation stage of project development. A separate DCR and Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared for the US 93 widening north of Wickenburg. The Final DCR and EA for the interim improvement project in Wickenburg are nearing completion.

## NEED FOR THE PROJECT

US 93 serves as the major regional transportation route connecting the Phoenix metropolitan area to northwest Arizona and beyond. The highway carries increasingly heavy local and regional traffic, with trucks comprising nearly 30 percent of the existing traffic volume. This traffic demand has overtaxed the capacity of the existing route, resulting in a majority of the US 93 corridor from Phoenix to the Arizona-Nevada state line being studied and programmed for widening and other improvements. ADOT's long-range goal is to provide a four-lane facility from Phoenix to the Nevada state line. The segment of US 93 from Wickenburg to the Santa Maria River is currently under study to achieve that goal. Perhaps the most critical element of that segment is the portion within Wickenburg, where narrow roadways and a restrictive, signalized intersection cause persistent, severe traffic congestion; localized air pollution and elevated noise levels; and safety concerns due to a higher potential for pedestrian/vehicle conflicts.

Because of the physical and environmental constraints along the US 93 corridor through Wickenburg, widening of the existing facility is not a viable alternative because it would result in a serious alteration of Wickenburg's historic downtown area and the displacement of numerous businesses. In addition, current concerns about safety and localized air/noise pollution would not be alleviated. Therefore, a bypass of the Wickenburg community would be the more prudent option. Accordingly, ADOT has initiated a comprehensive study to investigate and identify feasible transportation/route corridors for relocating US 93 around Wickenburg. As an interim measure, ADOT has

funded construction of a bypass around the immediate downtown Wickenburg area, which will alleviate congestion until funding for the ultimate bypass is available. As a portion of the corridor under study has been designated as a segment of the CANAMEX Corridor, any proposed bypasses should be compatible with this important North American Free Trade Corridor (NAFTA) facility as well as any long range plans developed by the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG).

## **AGENCY/PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Several federal, state, and local government agencies have been involved throughout the study process including the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The agency coordination effort associated with the Wickenburg Bypass Study was initiated by inviting federal, state, county, regional, and local agencies, as well as major utilities, to participate in the agency scoping meeting. These agencies are identified in Section 1.4 of this Report.

A public scoping meeting (6/13/99) and two public information meetings (8/22/00 and 12/05/01) were held in Wickenburg as part of the public involvement process. In addition, two public meetings were held in Morristown on December 13, 2000 and April 10, 2002 to discuss interchange options in the area of this community. Information handouts and exhibits were provided at each meeting as background information relative to formal presentations. Comments were received from the public during the question/comment period of each meeting and via written response on meeting questionnaire/comment sheets. Summaries of public opinion regarding the Route Corridor Alternatives and the Morristown Interchange Alternatives are presented in Sections 2.6 and 3.3, respectively.

Four newsletters were published and distributed in the *Wickenburg Sun* as well as through direct mailing. A web page ([www.wickenburg.civilnet.sverdrup.com](http://www.wickenburg.civilnet.sverdrup.com)) was also established and maintained to disseminate and receive information from the public.

## **Recommendation**

Based upon public input on the Route Corridor Alternatives and the reasons listed below, the Southwest Route Alternative (SWRA) and the Southern Loop Route Corridor (SLRC), which is a modification of the Far West Corridor, should be carried forward to the next level of project development involving the preparation of an Initial Design Concept Report and a Draft Environmental Assessment. Specific details of the alternatives evaluation are presented in Section 2.0.

- The SWRA would have the least impact to lands managed by the BLM relative to habitat values and acreage.
- The SWRA is nearly 6 miles shorter than the SLRC, displacing approximately 200 fewer acres along the entire route and having a shorter travel time.

- The SWRA impacts far fewer mining claims, potentially reducing the overall right of way cost and the potential for litigation.
- The SLRC and the SW Route Alternative both avoid the Raptor Protection Area (RPA) that the BLM is currently managing to protect the nesting and roosting habitat of several protected raptor species that are present in cliff areas on Vulture Peak and the Caballeros Peaks.
- The SLRC would provide better horizontal and vertical alignments because it would be located on a greater percentage of flat terrain than other alternatives, thereby minimizing the need for passing lanes and reducing the number of bridges across deep drainage channels in either rolling or mountainous terrain.
- The SLRC would provide a better opportunity to construct a bifurcated roadway with independent directional lanes to best fit the landform and facilitate phased construction.
- Numerous evaluation factors showed no clear advantage for either alternative.

Should the BLM decide to go ahead with an amendment to its Management Framework Plan to modify the RPA, the Far West Alternative could also be carried forward to the Design Concept Report and Environmental Assessment stage. The evaluation of the Morristown Interchange Alternatives and public opinion on those alternatives are presented in Section 3.0. Based upon those findings, Alternatives 1 and 2 are considered feasible and should be carried forward into more detailed analysis and refinement. Of these two alternatives, Alternative 1 is preferred. Alternatives 3 and 4 are considered less feasible.

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