

## V. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT/PROJECT COORDINATION

To ensure that the community has had ample opportunity to provide comments and be involved in the selection of the preferred alternative, development of this project has included an extensive public involvement process with public meetings, question and answer sessions, newsletters, and newspaper advertisements.

Public involvement for the proposed interim improvement was conducted concurrently with the proposed ultimate bypass southwest of Wickenburg. For clarity, only the portions of those meetings germane to the interim improvement study are included in this Draft EA.

### A. Scoping

The purpose of the scoping process is to identify potential issues, concerns, and opportunities (ICOs) that should be considered in the Location/Design Concept Study and EA for the proposed improvements. ICO information was obtained from area residents, business owners, and government agency representatives through public and agency scoping meetings. Additionally, a Steering Committee, comprised of federal, state, and local agencies as well as Wickenburg residents, was formed to act as a sounding board between the public and the Study Team. ICOs specific to the committee were obtained during initial committee meetings. ADOT's technical staff also provided input to the study. The scoping process for this project was summarized in a Project Scoping Report.

#### 1. Agency Scoping

An agency scoping meeting was held on June 3, 1999, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the Wickenburg Council Chambers, 155 North Tegner Street, Wickenburg, Arizona. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), ADOT, Arizona State Land Department (ASLD), Town of Wickenburg, Yavapai County, FWHA, and the Wickenburg Chamber of Commerce. The meeting was opened with a discussion of the study corridor, the purpose of the study, and the purpose of the agency scoping meeting. After reviewing the meeting handout, the floor was opened to the agency representatives to express their concerns regarding the Location/Design Concept Study and EA for the proposed highway improvements. The agency representatives voiced the issues and concerns listed below regarding the roadway's design, social and economic impacts, and environmental impacts.

#### Design

- Concern was expressed regarding potential material source sites and staging areas.
- Limit the number of left and right turns from the roadway to increase safety and operational efficiency.
- Concerns were expressed about present traffic congestion and its impact on pedestrian and motorist safety.

- An interim solution to downtown Wickenburg's traffic problems should be identified and evaluated.

### Social and Economic Impacts

- Disruption of hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian trails should be avoided if possible. If not, the design concept study needs to identify measures to maintain recreational access.
- Consistency with general land use plans should be considered.
- Avoid returning the existing roadway or interim improvement to Town of Wickenburg maintenance.
- Retain the compact character of the Wickenburg community.
- Minimize the impact of the route on residential areas.
- Maintain the quality of life of Wickenburg citizens (i.e., protect health, safety, and welfare) and preserve the historic character of downtown Wickenburg.
- Protect sales and property tax revenues and utility revenues for the Town of Wickenburg.
- Maintain consistency with long-term economic and environmental goals and needs of Wickenburg.
- Avoid negative impacts on Wickenburg's infrastructure.
- Minimize potential business failure, loss of jobs, and decreased property values.
- Minimize impacts on private property and recreation areas.
- Keep cost of proposed roadway in a reasonable range.

### Environmental Impacts

- Riparian habitat along the Hassayampa River and major washes in the study corridor should be avoided.
- Minimize air quality impacts and noise pollution.
- Minimize impacts on wildlife habitat.

## **2. Public Scoping**

A Public Scoping Meeting was held on June 3, 1999, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Wickenburg Community Center, 160 North Valentine Street, Wickenburg, Arizona. The meeting was advertised in the *Wickenburg Sun* and the *Arizona Republic* two weeks prior to the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to provide information about the study process to the general public and to provide an opportunity to gather public input on ICOs for the proposed highway improvements. Study Team members were available before and after the meeting to informally discuss the project.

One hundred seventy-two people signed in at the meeting. Sixty-one people submitted comments either by returning the comment form attached to the meeting handout or by sending a letter. A summary of their comments follows.

## Design

- Maintain access to local roads.
- Improve roadway safety and traffic flow.
- Maintain the convenience of the roadway.
- The alignment should turn north at the Stotz gas station, cross the park, and rejoin US 93 near the Chevron station.
- The interim improvement should become part of the permanent bypass.
- The interim improvement should consist of a divided four-lane highway.
- No bridges should be built for the interim improvement.
- Study traffic control measures rather than interim improvements.
- The interim improvement is a waste of time and money.
- Build the interim improvement as soon as possible.
- Concerned the interim improvement would become the permanent bypass.
- Concerned that the interim improvement study skirts the legal requirements for the permanent bypass.
- Truckers would use the shortest route instead of the interim bypass.

## Social and Economic Impacts

- Minimize impacts on private property.
- Avoid residential areas/neighborhoods.
- Protect existing recreational areas.
- Cost of building the roadway.
- Avoid negative impacts on businesses.
- Effects on Town of Wickenburg planning and growth.
- Protect school zones.
- Protect cultural resources.
- The interim improvement alternatives are unacceptable due to property impacts and decreased pedestrian safety.

## Environmental Impacts

- Impacts on air quality.
- Minimize visual impacts.
- Avoid wildlife and habitat impacts. Minimize the amount riparian habitat that would be destroyed.
- Minimize noise impacts. Concerns focused on highway noise in residential areas.
- Preserve local water quality.
- Avoid floodplain encroachment.

### **3. *Steering Committee***

The primary purpose of the Steering Committee is to evaluate the progress of the study, act as a sounding board, and assist in the exchange of information between the public and

the Study Team. Committee members represent the governmental agencies and citizen groups that are interested in or could be affected by the US 93 realignment and reconstruction. As a part of the scoping process for this study, all members were asked to provide a statement of their key issues/concerns at the first meeting, held at the Wickenburg Town Council Chamber on March 1, 1999, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Comments provided by the Steering Committee Members are summarized below. Several Steering Committee meetings have been held over the course of the study, as discussed in the *Ongoing Activities* section (page 70).

### Design

- Provide easy access to Wickenburg.
- Minimize highway turn-back to the Town of Wickenburg.

### Social and Economic Impacts

- Protect recreational resources.
- Retain the quality of life in the Wickenburg area.
- Preserve rural historic values.
- Preserve pedestrian and bicyclist safety.
- Avoid adverse effects on Wickenburg's infrastructure and any potential loss of utility revenues.
- Optimize the Town of Wickenburg's ability to manage land use and zoning.
- Promote Wickenburg as a tourist destination.
- Minimize potential business failures, lost jobs, and revenue reduction.
- Investigate opportunities to support local businesses.
- Support the socioeconomic goals of the community.
- Avoid residential displacements and loss or reduction in value of residential property.
- Keep project costs reasonable.

### Environmental Impacts

- Minimize noise impacts.
- Avoid adverse impacts on Hassayampa River. Develop appropriate mitigation.
- Minimize negative impacts on air quality.

## **B. Information Meetings**

### ***1. Public Information Meeting No. 1***

Public Information Meeting No. 1 was held at the Wickenburg Community Center from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. on August 22, 2000, to obtain public input on and to present several alternatives being considered for improving traffic flow through downtown Wickenburg. The meeting was advertised in the *Wickenburg Sun* and the *Arizona Republic* two weeks prior to the meeting. Three hundred forty-three people signed in at the meeting.

The meeting began with an explanation of the study process and how it had progressed since the Public Scoping Meeting. Numerous alternatives were described and illustrated as candidates for an interim improvement project to relieve existing congestion in Wickenburg prior to construction of the US 93 bypass. Of the 13 alignments considered, Alternatives 7 and 13 were presented as the two options with the most promise for development. Alternative 10, which would remove parking from North Tegner Street and Wickenburg Way, was described as the simplest and least costly solution.

The meeting was then opened for public comments and questions. A court reporter was present to ensure the open session was recorded accurately. In all, 38 people made comments at the meeting, including Vice Mayor Lon McDermott, ADOT Deputy State Engineer Dan Lance, members of the Wickenburg Town Council, representatives of citizens' groups, business owners, and concerned citizens.

Most oral comments were regarding the interim improvement alternatives presented at the meeting. Twenty people voiced opposition to Alternative 10. Most of these people cited safety concerns with the alternative, especially the safety of pedestrians and schoolchildren. In addition, many voiced concerns about potential negative impacts on downtown businesses due to parking removal and decreased pedestrian access. Seven speakers stated that they opposed Alternative 7 due to concerns about a nearby school at its northern terminus and access to the hospital. Environmental concerns were also presented, including air pollution, flooding, noise impacts, and hazardous materials risk.

Alternative 13 was supported by 12 speakers and opposed by six. Supporters noted that the alternative would improve traffic flow and safety and move traffic out of downtown. Detractors stated that traffic would still remain too close to downtown and voiced similar environmental concerns as with Alternative 7.

Six people preferred designated truck routes to the interim alternatives. Suggestions included building a two-lane truck route along the ultimate bypass alignment as well as using existing roads to connect I-10 to US 93 north of Wickenburg. Nine speakers stated they were opposed to any interim project. Most were concerned that the interim would compete with funding for the ultimate bypass. Other general concerns and questions were voiced, including funding, environmental issues, private property impacts, and lack of consensus on the interim issue.

Forms were made available at the meeting to allow the public to submit written comments. A total of 93 comment forms were turned in and are summarized below. In addition to the forms, several letters, faxes, and emails were received after the public meeting.

#### Written Comment Summary

- Just over 50 percent expressed opposition to Alternative 10, citing safety concerns as well as negative impacts to downtown and businesses. About 3 percent were in favor of the alternative.

- More than 36 percent opposed Alternative 7, stating concerns about proximity to a school, hospital, and residential areas, flooding, and various environmental impacts including noise and air quality. Several suggested that the alternative would not relieve congestion because it would not move traffic far enough away from downtown and would not improve traffic flow at the bridge. About 3 percent supported the alternative.
- Fifty percent supported Alternative 13, while nearly 16 percent opposed it. Reasons for opposition included risk of flooding, air and noise pollution, and environmental and socioeconomic impacts. Concerns regarding traffic congestion due to proximity to downtown and the configuration of traffic signals were also voiced.
- Nearly 6 percent suggested combining the bridge from Alternative 7 with the road alignment from Alternative 13.
- Almost 25 percent supported another interim solution. The most common suggestions were building a two-lane truck route along the proposed southwestern bypass alignment, designating a truck route from I-10 to US 93 via Eagle Eye or Vulture Mine Road and SR 71, and Alternative 12.
- Just fewer than 25 percent opposed construction of any interim solution, stating that it would compete with the US 93 bypass in terms of funding and resources, that it would cause environmental impacts, and that Wickenburg's residents are not in agreement on the issue.
- Other comments included general concerns about safety, visual impacts, traffic flow, and cost.

## **2. Public Information Meeting No. 2**

Public Information Meeting No. 2 was held from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. on December 5, 2001, at the Wickenburg Community Center to obtain public input on and to present the interim improvement alternatives that had been developed since the previous meeting. The meeting was advertised in the *Wickenburg Sun* and the *Arizona Republic* two weeks prior to the meeting. One hundred fifty-eight citizens signed in at the meeting.

The meeting began with an explanation of the study process and how it had progressed since Public Information Meeting #1. Alternatives 7, 13, 14, 15, and 16 were described in detail, with Alternative 16 presented as the preferred alternative. The meeting was then opened for public comments and questions. A court reporter was present to ensure the open session was recorded accurately. In all, 20 people made comments at the meeting, including Wickenburg officials, members of the Wickenburg Chamber of Commerce, representatives of citizens' groups, business owners, and concerned citizens.

Most oral comments were regarding the interim improvement alternatives presented at the meeting. Fifteen people stated their support for Alternative 16, nine of whom also suggested minor modifications to the design concept. Suggestions for modifications included the following: add a connector to Bralliar Road to provide direct access to the hospital; move the mainline east to lessen impacts on residences along the west side of the new R/W; adjust the tie-in at northern terminus to benefit businesses; design for a 100-year flood event; designate the existing roadway as a business loop; provide

adequate signage for businesses; and keep the old Hassayampa bridge. One person voiced objection to Alternative 16 due to the impact it would have on businesses in the North Tegner Street commercial area.

Concerns about Alternative 16 included impacts on businesses, acquisition of private property for R/W, visual impacts, safety, and future development near the northern terminus. Several speakers also voiced concerns or opposition to the other interim improvement alternatives, in particular Alternatives 10, 14, and 15.

Forms were provided at the meeting to allow the public to submit written comments. A total of 46 comment forms were turned in and are summarized below. In addition to the forms, several letters, faxes, and emails were received after the public meeting.

### Written Comment Summary

- Sixty-five percent supported Alternative 16, 17 percent opposed it, and 17 percent did not state a preference.
- Concerns with Alternative 16 included four comments with concerns about flooding, three concerning noise or visual impacts, and two regarding air pollution.
- Other concerns noted in the comment sheets included impacts on businesses, traffic congestion at the signalized intersections, impacts on residences near the roadway, that it would become a permanent bypass, and that there was opposition to any interim project.
- Two comment sheets included suggestions to build the ultimate bypass using the funds for the interim improvement project.
- Two commenters suggested raising the roadway profile to accommodate 100-year flood event, while two preferred providing for a 50-year flood to avoid the roadway having the appearance of a levee.
- Two suggested adding an access road from the hospital or connector at Bralliar Road, one suggested that such a connector was unnecessary, and two suggested moving the roadway alignment as far east as possible to avoid residential areas.
- Other suggestions included signage for businesses, avoiding the Community Center, only providing two lanes, providing good access for businesses, maintaining the old Hassayampa bridge, designating Tegner Street as a business loop, and adjusting the northern terminus.

## **C. Hearing**

A public hearing for this Draft EA is tentatively planned for spring of 2002. A transcript of the public hearing would be included in the Final EA. In addition, a summary of public comments received following distribution of this Draft EA and during the public hearing comment period, as well as ADOT responses, would be provided in the Final EA.

## **D. Other Ongoing Activities**

Public involvement has also been achieved during the course of the study through the use of study updates and Steering Committee meetings.

### ***1. Study Updates***

Study update newsletters were included in the *Wickenburg Sun* in May 1999, February 2000, and October 2000. An additional newsletter is planned following Public Information Meeting No. 2. Also, a project web site offering study information has been available during the course of the study for public information and feedback. The web site address is <http://www.wickenburg.civilnet.sverdrup.com>.

### ***2. Steering Committee Meetings***

A Partnering Workshop on February 17, 1999, established a Steering Committee composed of representatives of various local community and government organizations. The purpose of this team is to provide communication and coordination with government and community organizations, review study progress, provide evaluation of alternatives, and act as a sounding board. The Steering Committee has held 12 meetings over the course of the US 93 study.

Steering Committee meeting discussions regarding the proposed interim improvement project generally focused on developing and evaluating the various interim improvement alternatives presented for study, cost and funding issues relative to the proposed ultimate US 93 bypass southwest of Wickenburg, public opinion, and developing consensus.