



MEETING MINUTES

Sverdrup Civil, Inc.

January 18, 2001

Location and Time: Tuesday, December 19, 2000 – 1:00 p.m.
Hassayampa River Preserve Conference Room

Participants:

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Representative</u>	<u>Participating Alternate</u>
ADOT	Grant Wills	
Sverdrup Civil	Bert Bertleson	
Bureau of Land Management	Mike Taylor	Angela Mogel
Maricopa County	Mike Sabatini	Tim Oliver
Yavapai County	Richard Straub	Gay Hendin (absent)
State Land Department	Sheila McCafferty (Absent)	
Town of Wickenburg – Elected	Lon McDermott	
Town of Wickenburg – Staff	Fred Carpenter	
Wickenburg School District #9	Doug Price	
Chamber of Commerce – Business	Royce Kardinal	
Chamber of Commerce – Transportation Committee	Bill Green	
Homeowners – Northeast	Jim Liggett	
Homeowners – Southwest	Andy Anderson	
Homeowners – Morristown	Walter Kadle	Absent
B.O.O.T.	Jim Dickinson	Absent
Recreation Groups	Richard Wertz	
Hassayampa River Preserve	Mike Rigney	

Subject: **US 93, Wickenburg to Santa Maria River
Location/Design Concept Study
TRACS No. 093 YV 161 H4871 01 L
Steering Committee Meeting**

MEETING SUMMARY:

- 1. Open Comments:** The meeting opened at approximately 1:10 with Bert Bertleson providing opening remarks and a recap of the progress since the last Steering Committee Meeting.
 - A Public Meeting was held on August 22, 2000 at the Town Community Center with over 350 in attendance.
 - Since the meeting, we have received hundreds of comments/calls/e-mails/letters with a wide variety of opinions on what should be built, and where it should be located.
 - ADOT & Sverdrup are pleased with the volume of community response, as it is proof that public involvement on this project is working.



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- Information/Data collected to date on both the Bypass and the Interim Improvements are still preliminary in nature. Evaluation of the concepts is continuing, and Bert emphasized that the concepts are still subject to change. With the many conflicting desires, a perfect solution that will please everyone is not likely.
- In response to a request from the community of Morristown, we made a presentation on the study process to date at the Morristown Elementary School on December 13. An overview of the August 22 Public Meeting was presented, as well as a presentation of possible bypass connections/interchanges with US 60. The interchange concepts are described in detail later in these meeting minutes.
- Similar to the recent Morristown meeting, Bert noted that special, informal presentations could be made to other groups if requests for the presentation are made.

Bert provided an opportunity for committee members to ask any questions before getting into the agenda items. The following issues/questions were raised:

J. Liggett: At the Morristown meeting, Jim was amused by the response: "...you can't talk to these guys. They're Engineers!"

D. Price / L. McDermott: What is the projected end date of the study? Bert postponed the response till later as proposed in items 3 & 4 of the agenda.

R. Wertz: Dick was aware that we were meeting with the Corps of Engineers, and inquired of the results of those meetings. Bert postponed the response till later as proposed in item 4 of the agenda.

2. Overview of the NEPA Process: B. Bertleson noted that we had received many letters and comments offering questions and challenges to Sverdrup's following of the public involvement procedures outlined in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Once again, a presentation was made to the committee explaining the requirements and ADOT's/Sverdrup's approach to public involvement.

Karim Data, ADOT's Environmental Monitor for this project, presented an overview of the NEPA process, and the efforts expended to date.

- Goal of NEPA is to minimize man-made impacts to environment.
- NEPA regulations only require that a single Public Hearing be held to present the alternatives and a recommendation to the public. ADOT, however, far exceeds this requirement by holding several public meetings through scoping and alternatives development. ADOT is viewed nationally as a leader in the public involvement process with the number of public meetings held and their history of coordinating with Federal/State/County and local agencies, as well as interest groups.
- Scoping has essentially been occurring on this project for nearly three years.



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- As a result of scoping, several alternatives had been considered. Through evaluation and agency/public input, the bypass routes were consolidated into a single, wide corridor for further investigation
- Alternatives are being developed within the corridor and detailed evaluations are just starting.
- The nature of the discovery process is change. Concepts that may have been abandoned may be reconsidered if the evaluation process uncovers new information that indicates further study is warranted.
- While Sverdrup may have concluded that one alignment within the corridor is more desirable than another, analysis must be performed on both the Southwest and the Far West route options.
- The study is progressing to produce an Environmental Assessment (EA). At this time, no Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required.

Following Karim's presentation, several questions were raised as follows:

F. Carpenter: *What would push the NEPA process to require an EIS be prepared?* Typically, substantial impacts must be encountered such as significant harm to the environment. Other impacts, such as significant displacements of private property, could push the process into an EIS. Both corridors will have similar environmental impacts and neither appear to warrant an EIS at this time.

F. Carpenter: *If an EIS is required, will the Steering Committee still be involved?* Yes. There would be no change in the public involvement or participation process.

R. Wertz: *During the Yarnell Mine EIS, a two-year study was prepared, and only 30-days was provided to comment. This was not enough time to review an EIS/EA. Will we be given more time?* Yes. The draft document will be available for comment at least 45 days prior to the Public Hearing. Comments can still be made after the hearing, as a comment period is provided for that meeting as well.

R. Wertz: *The BLM already studied a significant portion of our alignment area as part of the recreation plan. Doesn't this information apply to the new study?* There are many differences between the level of detail of their study and the ADOT highway study. The regulations have changed, the focus is different, and the lists of studied species has changed. A. Mogal of the BLM concurred that their document was not adequate for the highway study.

L. McDermott: *How long will all of this take?* A working draft of the EA is scheduled for late spring, 2001. We anticipate a copy available for public comment by fall, 2001. This applies to the bypass study only. While the interim study is on a similar schedule, the issues with the Corps of Engineers and river/water issues may delay the progress of that study.

L. McDermott: *If in November the EA changes to an EIS, how much additional time will be required?* The EA will have most of the data required for the EIS anyway. We will need an



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additional 6 months to draft the EIS document, and it could delay the decision another year or so. The FHWA as the lead agency would make the decision to publish an EIS.

J. Liggott: Expressed surprise at the uncertainty of whether or not an EIS is required. As the evaluation continues, several factors need to be studied further before enough information is compiled to make the determination. At this point, nothing is fixed or certain. In addition, a “No-Build” conclusion is also possible. If we cannot reach consensus, the State or FHWA will not expend any monies on improvements where they are not desired.

3. Bypass Evaluation Update: Sverdrup is developing individual alignments within the two corridors for detailed evaluation. In addition, we did develop some possible connections from the US 93 bypass to tie into US 60 near the community of Morristown. The concepts presented to the Steering Committee were the same as those presented to the residents at the December 13 meeting in Morristown. Bert emphasized that these concepts were preliminary and had not yet been reviewed by ADOT staff. They were being presented, however, to show the general direction that the connections are taking, and to generate comments on the proposed concepts.

Early in the study process, two possible crossing locations of the Hassayampa River were presented; one near (or slightly north of) the BN&ATSF railroad bridge crossing, and the second closer to the section line separating township sections 10 and 15. Upon further evaluation, it was concluded that attempting to build an interchange at or north of the railroad bridge crossing, with the adjacent steep canyon walls, wide river crossing, and railroad conflict, was too costly and difficult to construct. In addition, there was no room to develop the interchange to provide access to US 60, SR 74, or the adjacent properties.

Two interchange concepts were developed for the remaining, southerly crossing of the Hassayampa. The first concept realigned the portion of US 60 north of the bypass to tie directly into SR 74. The bypass would then tie directly into the southern portion of US 60. The second option was to tie the bypass directly into SR 74. Both concepts were developed in stages, with a simple 2-lane, undivided two-way connection from the bypass to US 60. For this connection, a simple “T” intersection would be constructed. The second phase was to build a diamond interchange, with traffic entering/exiting the bypass from ramps tying onto US 60. In the future, should the highways carry significant traffic, a third phase can be constructed to build a systems interchange with continuous ramps tying all traffic movements together.

There were many opposed to the interchange concepts in Morristown. Several requested that we consider shifting the improvements further to the south to tie into US 60 south of where the railroad already crosses US 60. While this shift would not require the bypass to cross the railroad, it would make the connection to SR 74 more difficult, and could require a wider crossing of the Hassayampa River. In addition, it would still require the purchase of private property. Sverdrup will investigate if shifting the alignment would make a connection to US 60 easier and reduce the private property takes.



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4. Interim Improvement Study Update: B. Bertleson provided an overview of the interim projects. He reminded the group of ADOT's original objectives for the interim. It is not a bypass substitute, it must be cost effective, and it must be usable by the town after the bypass is complete. It is understood that the interim will not solve, nor is it intended to solve the same problems as the bypass. It is only to help alleviate the congestion until the bypass can be constructed.

Alternative 10: The Project Assessment for improving the intersection of Tegner and Wickenburg Way is nearly complete. No further action will be taken pending a mutually agreed upon schedule between ADOT and the Town.

Alternative 7: Bert described the improvements associated with Alternative 7.

Any interim roadway must be designed to ensure that new construction will not raise the backwater elevation upstream of the existing US 60 bridges thereby placing ADOT at risk for any future flooding liabilities. Currently, the 50-year flooding event hits the bottom chord of the upstream bridge, with the 100-year event hitting the top chord. Also, the downstream bridge does not have adequate freeboard for the two flood stages. By reconstructing the bridge crossing with adequate freeboard, the existing backwater profile could be significantly lowered. This change would more than adequately compensate for any effect caused by the interim roadway. Therefore, Alternative 7 (or 13) will involve a replacement of both of the existing US 60 bridges over the Hassayampa River.

Sverdrup will coordinate future development of the alternatives with the Corp of Engineers and the Flood Control District of Maricopa County (FCDMC). The town has contracted with the Corps to prepare hydraulics and sediment transport analysis of Soles Wash and the Hassayampa River up and downstream of the confluence of the two floodways. Sverdrup intends to take advantage of this opportunity to evaluate the effect of Alternative 7 on the channel flow using the Corps modeling. This will ensure agreement between the Corps and ADOT when applying for a Corps 404 permit to construct within the floodplain. Sverdrup also met with FCDMC and received a tentative agreement to possibly share costs with ADOT to mitigate the flooding problem associated with Sols Wash.

Many have commented that a 4-lane roadway is not required. Sverdrup has mentioned several times to the committee that ADOT standards and traffic operations require that a 4-lane roadway be built to provide safety and the adequate capacity. In addition, even if a 2-lane facility were considered, shoulders would be required for disabled vehicles, especially trucks. The two-lane roadway with adequate shoulders is nearly the same width as a 4-lane roadway. Therefore, the cost and impacts to the adjacent property is nearly the same. The town has the option to re-stripe the roadway to a 2-lane section after the bypass is built and the interim is turned back to Wickenburg.



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Alternative 13: Bert described the improvements associated with Alternative 13. The issues related to the Hassayampa River and Sols Wash are similar to those described for Alternative 7.

Alternative 13 is significantly more costly than Alternative 7. This is due to the additional bridge crossing, costs associated with crossing an EPA Super Fund Site, and maintaining the drainage and floodplain equilibrium with the improvements located so much further into the flood plain than Alternative 7.

Evaluation of both alternatives will continue.

5. Implementation / Funding: As described in several meetings, Bert explained that both the interim and the bypass facilities need to proceed together to successfully meet all of the goals identified through our scoping meetings. The interim will alleviate the current traffic congestion, but will be inadequate for the long-term projected traffic volumes. Also, the interim will not solve the air quality, noise, and safety issues. Unfortunately, it will be many years before the ultimate bypass is completed and it is unrealistic to ignore the growing traffic problems until that time. Therefore, the interim should be implemented in the near term and the development of the bypass initiated now to ensure that it is complete when needed.

Bert described a possible implementation plan to accomplish both the near and long term goals.

- Design and construct the interim.
- Establish R/W needs for the ultimate bypass and secure R/W from the BLM.
- Work towards funding the remaining R/W, design, and construction of the bypass to be done in phases.
- Construct the Bypass in phases, building only the northbound lanes initially. The first phase of this two-lane facility would be from Vulture Mine Road north to US 93. If Vulture Mine Road (VMR) is later identified as a possible truck bypass for the Canamex Highway, a connection to VMR will already be in place.
- Build the second phase of the bypass to connect to US 60. This connection will be constructed in time for traffic to start using the bypass at the time the previously constructed interim improvements become congested due to high traffic volumes.
- For Phase Three of the bypass, complete the northern bypass improvements, including the interchanges to US 93, US 60, and VMR. (In the event that VMR is not used as a Canamex Corridor, then an interchange is not required).



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- Phase Four of the bypass would complete the southern half of the 4-lane, divided highway and the interchange with US 60 and SR 74.

Tim Oliver was concerned with the proposal to use VMR as a Canamex, or any high volume roadway as the existing roadway is not constructed for high traffic or truck volumes. The roadway has a minor surfacing course that will quickly deteriorate if the higher volumes start to use the facility. In addition, there are virtually no drainage features on the existing roadway. To be used as a major roadway, several improvements would need to be made including the following:

- New roadway surfacing with base preparation, AC, and a better wearing course.
- A new bridge crossing over Jack Rabbit Wash as a minimum.
- New drainage culverts at other drainage crossings to replace numerous dip crossings
- Construct a new interchange with I-10 to provide direct access to VMR.

It was noted that a separate study will eventually recommend the location of the Canamex Route. A regional traffic map was presented that supported the need for the bypass, regardless of what happens with the Canamex designation. Over half of the Metropolitan Phoenix area will use US 60 / SR 74 to travel to the northern portions of the State. This volume of traffic, without any Canamex trucks, will require the completion of the bypass at some future date.

6. Open Discussion: There were no additional items discussed at this time.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS:

If any of the above is contrary to the recollection of the participants, they are to contact Sverdrup Civil Inc. to note the discrepancy within two weeks of distribution.

Signed: _____

Berwyn S. Wilbrink, PE
Deputy Project Manager

Attachments: Copy of PowerPoint Presentation Slides

Distribution: Participants



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Gay Hendin, Yavapai County Public Works Department
Sheila McCafferty, Arizona State Land Development
Mike Taylor, Bureau of Land Management
Walter Kadle, Morrystown Homeowners
George Wallace, ADOT Predesign Studies Section
Karim Dada, ADOT Environmental Planning Group
Steve Thomas, FHWA
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