

I-11 Corridor Stakeholders Engagement Meeting Notes

Group C/D – April 26, 2018

Wheeler Taft Abbett Sr. Library

7800 N. Schisler Drive

Tucson, AZ 85743

12:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

BACKGROUND:

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) are preparing a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Interstate 11 (I-11) Corridor between Nogales and Wickenburg, Arizona. The Tier 1 EIS will assess the potential social, economic and natural environmental impacts of a No Build Alternative and a reasonable range of Build Corridor Alternatives for a proposed transportation facility within the I-11 Tier 1 EIS Corridor Study area. The Notice of Intent to prepare the I-11 Tier 1 EIS was issued in May 2016. Since then, FHWA and ADOT have conducted public and agency scoping meetings, outreach to tribes and stakeholders, and completed an alternatives development and screening process.

FHWA and ADOT have invited the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (U.S. Institute) to facilitate meetings with interested stakeholders regarding the I-11 Tier 1 EIS Corridor Study in Pima County, to augment the ongoing public input effort. The objective of these stakeholder group meetings is to provide a method for additional productive Pima County community conversations to inform the Interstate 11 Corridor Environmental Impact study with more specifics regarding individual community concerns and preferences to enable technical analysis and planning.

This is the last of three meetings for the C/D Study Group, which includes stakeholders located in the geographical area west and northwest of the Tucson mountains.

AGENDA ITEMS & HIGHLIGHTS

TOPIC	DETAILS
WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS	The US Institute's 3 rd party neutral facilitator, Joy Keller-Weidman, welcomed everyone. Introduced herself, as Senior Program Manager, Transportation Sector; and the Senior Program Associate, Mitch Chrismer, who will be co-facilitating and notetaking.

TOPIC	DETAILS
MEETING OVERVIEW	Reviewed the Meeting#3 Outcomes & Agenda Items <u>OUTCOMES:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand the values, interests and characteristics most important to the stakeholders• Identify potential impacts/benefits of proposed corridors based on local knowledge within the stakeholder group<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Identify ways to mitigate/promote those

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore creative alternatives/options moving forward that address concerns • Inform decision-makers re: what is most important to stakeholder groups <p><u>AGENDA</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting overview (Meeting outcomes, agenda & meeting agreements) (10 minutes) <input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders' Input (50 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focus discussion of options related to identified key themes (<i>i.e. Viewsheds, Wildlife Connectivity, Community cohesion, etc.</i>); and stakeholders provide pros and cons of each (small groups) <input type="checkbox"/> BREAK (10 minutes) <input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders' Input (80 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If option C/D were selected, what would you want it to look like? ○ <i>What are opportunities and/or mitigation options for decision makers to consider if Option C/D was selected? (design features?)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> BREAK (10 minutes) <input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders' Input (30 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are the most important aspects for the decision makers to consider going forward? <input type="checkbox"/> Future Public Involvement (5 minutes) <input type="checkbox"/> Closing Comments and Meeting feedback (15 minutes)
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TOPIC	DETAILS
INTRODUCTIONS	<p>Facilitator asked for everyone to share their name & stakeholder group</p> <p>Stakeholders present represented the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avra Water Co-op • Sonoran Institute • Friends of Saguaro National Park • Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arizona Heritage Alliance • Avra Valley Coalition • National Parks Conservation Association • Caterpillar • Freeport McMoran • Maran Unified School District • AZ Sonoran Desert Museum <p>In addition, 1 staff member was present from FHWA and 4 from ADOT.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aryan Lirange – FHWA • Laura Douglas – ADOT • Carlos Lopez– ADOT • Jay Van Echo– ADOT • Kim Noetzel– ADOT
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TOPIC	DETAILS
MEETING AGREEMENTS	<p>The facilitator referred to the items below and asked for consensus on these meeting agreements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be prepared to participate, collaborate, and share pertinent information. 2. Engage in a respectful, thoughtful deliberation. 3. One person speaks at a time: Listen carefully when not speaking. 4. Be open to all perspectives. 5. Keep in mind the large picture (regional interests as they relate to larger needs and priorities), as well as your individual/stakeholder group viewpoint. 6. Turn off or mute all electronic devices, so there are no distractions. 7. No recording devices will be allowed during the meeting.

TOPIC	DETAILS
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STAKEHOLDERS' INPUT	Focus discussion of options related to identified key themes (<i>i.e. Viewsheds, Wildlife Connectivity, Community cohesion, etc.</i>); and stakeholders provide pros and cons of each, working in small groups, and using the <u>Chart below:</u>
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GROUP 1 KEY CONSIDERATIONS RE: CORRIDOR DESIGN OPTIONS	PROs	CONs
<p><u>Invasive Species:</u></p> <p>OPTION #1</p> <p>Source of ongoing maintenance funding needed – buffelgrass will spread inevitably, will require ongoing maintenance to restrict spread from roadside.</p> <p>OPTION#2</p>	<p>If have funding will reduce spread of invasive species. Treat roadsides continuously</p>	<p>Cost, also in future may need worry about additional invasive species</p>
<p><u>WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY</u></p> <p>OPTION #1</p> <p>Passes: overpasses /underpasses -both will be needed, exact locations TBD</p>	<p>Connectivity for wildlife (but still limits it), fewer vehicle/wildlife traffic accidents</p>	<p>Current studies on endangered species may not be relevant in future / when project is actually implemented. Don't have enough data to say where crossings are needed, or what kind.</p>
<p><u>Water and air quality</u></p>		

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DESIGN OPTIONS		
<p><u>VIEWSHEDS:</u> OPTION #1</p> <p>Possibly bury highway altogether? Depends if road built with intent to improve access to areas or just move freight through area – “cut and cover” method of building freeway, use natural materials to camouflage. Depress highway below grade or screened with vegetation and earth to absorb sound.</p>	<p>Blend into natural landscape, control light / sound. Lower sound and visual impact, lower light pollution.</p>	<p>Cost, may not mitigate all impacts. May not be possible to do with right of way constraints.</p>
<p><u>Economic impacts:</u> OPTION #1</p> <p>Mineral potential beyond actual current mining sites - avoid impacting where future mining activities could occur. Maintain a 1000ft buffer around areas where mining could occur to avoid disrupting areas of mineralization – don't want to limit mining operations and potentially lose mineral interests.</p> <p>OPTION#2</p> <p>Saguaro NP visitor experience could deteriorate, tourism to park could go down.</p> <p>OPTION 3</p> <p>Depress freeway near park</p>	<p>Easier access to park</p> <p>Visual impact reduced, lower sound, noise</p>	<p>Tax park resources, degrade visitor experience</p> <p>Cost, may not mitigate all impacts</p>
<u>Invasives:</u>		

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<p>OPTION #1</p> <p>Buffelgrass issue could be exacerbated if new freeway built – will need long-term commitment to control / mitigate / monitor spread of buffelgrass. No way to avoid - all disturbance will impact this issue. To minimize impact, use best practices in construction. To mitigate impact, will require an intensive program to monitor and remove plant incursion.</p>	<p>Reduce net gain of expansion of buffelgrass – create a loss goal</p>	<p>Costly, may not mitigate all impacts</p>
<p><u>Cultural impact:</u> OPTION #1</p> <p>Concerns about impacts to McGee(ville?) Ranch community – and other places with historical/cultural significance to landscape – need to avoid impact as much as possible. Also avoid Indian lands, Saguaro NP, Ironwood, BLM parcels, TMC, CAP, etc. Protect current sites and potential new discoveries.</p>		
<p><u>WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY</u> OPTION #1</p> <p>Pick a good alignment – pair path with existing infrastructure (i.e. immediately downstream of CAP where water flow is already reduced) - would help avoid impacts</p> <p>OPTION#2</p> <p>Wildlife crossings – build on existing areas of connectivity that exist in CAP. Could also cross CAP where needed as net benefit to fragmentation.</p> <p>OPTION #3</p> <p>Locate next to CAP</p>	<p>Improve existing connectivity</p> <p>May minimize impact, crossings well defined by CAP</p>	<p>May not fully mitigate impacts, costly, additional study may be necessary</p> <p>May not be lower impact due to other considerations</p>
<p><u>COMMUNITY COHESION</u></p>		

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<p><u>WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY</u> OPTION #1</p> <p>Some species prefer habitat at high slope (i.e. bighorn). Historical migration patterns for bighorn vast and well known. Bighorn would prefer a bridge; would need huge openness index if going under a structure. Other species require shelter for a crossing. Microclimates needed for other species (i.e. smaller species). Openness index is critical for underpasses.</p> <p>OPTION#2</p> <p>Linear features isolate Tucson mountains, lead to gene pool stagnation. Need un-isolate Tucson mountains. Wildlife bridges needed (Avra Valley Road at I-10). Other bridges will require land purchases (i.e. N and S of BOR corridor, near Ironwood, near Saguaro NP, Southern Pinal per NAU / AZGFD, etc.). Linkage across I-10 near Pinal county needed. Need address E/W crossing issues in Avra valley.</p>	<p>Avoid extinction, reduce threats to rare species, promote gene exchange, avoid vehicle/wildlife collisions, ecosystem benefits to humans</p>	<p>Cost</p>
<p><u>COMMUNITY COHESION</u> OPTION #1</p> <p>Burying. Allow access for local traffic, maintain existing access to Tucson MP, Old Tucson, Desert Museum, etc. Whole valley is cultural landscape for native Americans. Gunsight and other identified National Historic Registry eligible sites. Avoid all cultural sites.</p>	<p>Maintain quality of life, maintain viewsheds</p>	

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<p><u>Invasive species</u> OPTION #1</p> <p>Buffelgrass, other invasives have already impacted large areas of Sonoran Desert. Spraying alone not completely effective at reducing spread. Spread easily after fire. Can be lit easily during fire season (i.e. from a spark from a chain on a vehicle).</p>	<p>Burying roadway is a useful design option for fire prevention</p>	
<p><u>Wash integrity</u> OPTION #1</p> <p>Avoid changes in natural regime. Widely distributed channel system – may require freeway elevation. High likelihood of challenges with 10,000 CFS flows along Brawley /Los Robles system. Elevate roadway as in FL, LA, etc.</p>	<p>Maintain watershed integrity, avoid changes in natural regime. Avoid floodplain.</p>	<p>Elevation would adversely impact wildlife connectivity, viewsheds</p>
<p><u>Cultural</u> OPTION #1</p> <p>Area important to Tohono O’odham. Number of identified areas of cultural importance, including the gun site – known to SHPO already, potential route could infringe. Important to avoid cultural sites</p>		

Stakeholder comment: Many other issues not covered in above discussion, need more study on many other items.

TOPIC	DETAILS
<p>STAKEHOLDERS’ INPUT</p>	<p>If option C/D were selected, what would you want it to look like?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No-build preferred. • Design should serve all key stakeholders and meet environmental demands with no negative impacts to any stakeholder (especially

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	<p>environmental). Low impact, reduce visibility, good accessibility - all important aspects to consider. Serve needs of school children in area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meet pedestrian, bicycle, and local traffic needs in the corridor while moving express traffic through as well.• Prefer to protect open space – greater need to do that than increasing the number of visitors to Desert Museum / Saguaro NP.• Prefer highway be invisible from Tucson mountains. Sound, noise, etc.• No impact on connectivity for wildlife – easy for all wildlife to migrate through.• Keep open space agreements already in place, control development that could occur on/near on ramps etc. i.e. control over where gas stations go.• Land acquisition along development, connectivity, open space preservation, crossing for all wildlife (no impact on connectivity).• Ongoing revenue for invasive species control – constant stream of funding for maintenance / protection from invasives.• Serve local and inter-state needs – i.e. keep roads in place that already provide access to Saguaro NP, desert museum, etc.• The I-11 in Avra Valley avoids impacts to environmental, cultural, and economic assets while minimizing impacts by a screened or below grade design. Ecological connectivity is improved from the current conditions with well-placed wildlife crossings that cross the CAP along with the I-11. The highway is invisible from the Tucson mountains and cannot be heard or smelled from nearby communities. Access is fully controlled and permanently limited in areas of high sensitivity.• Enclosed freeway – but minimization of ground disturbance also important to avoid impacts from invasives. Entry point, bored, 2-tiered to keep truck traffic separate from car traffic, light rail. Use top to address wildlife corridors, parks, trails. This design would proactively address light, sound, fire concerns, flood control, odor, air pollution, dust (minimize Valley fever spread), and viewsheds.• Protect Freeport reserves and interests, protect Caterpillar assets in area. I-11 should go around Freeport and Caterpillar properties
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	<p>(to either side).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations at the Sierrita Mine cannot be disrupted for the life of the mine, including future reserves. • Keep corridor as narrow as possible with lots of wildlife crossings. • Recessed below grade level – preferably based underground to minimize impact to viewshed and maintain connectivity of wildlife habitat between Tucson mountains and Waterman mountains. The underground option would also maintain rural quality of life for existing residents. Also helps existing surface transportation routes. • There would be sufficient wildlife crossings to assure wildlife connectivity at the same level as now. • In crossing the Tucson Mitigation Corridor (TMC), the highway would be at grade level, with sufficient wildlife crossings. An elevated highway through TMC is unacceptable. If the current restrictions on development within the TMC could not be modified, then that is a good reason not to select Option C/D. • Access should be very limited in the portion of the highway between Avra Valley Road and the southern border of the TMC. This should be done in a way that eliminates or greatly reduces the development of fuel, food, lodging, or other transportation service facilities along this portion of the highway. • Control the spread of buffelgrass in Avra Valley.
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TOPIC	DETAILS
CLOSING COMMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Q: How were stakeholders selected for this process? Likely other stakeholders that would want / should be part of this process. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A: After ASR public meeting phase, FHWA decided to do deeper dive, decided to establish this process, asked consultants to research records from Scoping and ASR meetings, collect email addresses for organizations, found 68 total organizations, sent emails to each of those organizations, asked for nominations for individuals from those organizations, and asked for those orgs to nominate any other individuals that

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	<p>might be interested in this process. Every nomination was placed in this process. No one turned away.</p> <p>This group / process is designed for non-governmental organizations. Federal, State and Local Agencies, along with Tribal, such as the Tohono O’odham Nation, outreach is a separate process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Thanks all for putting this all together, not an easy task to put things together like this, thanks ADOT/FHWA/Institute.◆ Thanks, great to hear all of these specific issues, very eye-opening, great learning experience, hopefully will be more like this in the future.◆ This was an excellent process, wish we had more time / meetings to address all issues, many issues not covered in this limited time, Avra valley unified in opposition to C/D route. Hope process continues.◆ ADOT: Thanks everybody; we all know public process / democracy can be messy. Goal was to hear from everyone. This process will continue. Only in Tier 1 EIS right now. Still will be another environmental analysis. This is a learning process for State & FHWA. Appreciate everyone’s time on this.◆ FHWA: Appreciate everyone’s time, appreciate feedback developed. USIECR report comes next, then continue NEPA process to look at pros and cons.
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