



Pinal County Corridors Definition Study

Summary Report No. 3 - Public Involvement, Round Three

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1. INTRODUCTION

In September 2004, the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) Transportation Planning Division initiated three corridor definition studies to determine the need for and feasibility of developing major transportation corridors in Pinal County:

- US 60 Corridor Definition Study;
- Williams Gateway Corridor Definition Study;
- Pinal County Corridors Definition Study.

In February 2006, the State Transportation Board approved the combined recommendations of the three corridor definition studies. The recommendations approved by the State Transportation Board included a North-South Freeway between Apache Junction and the Florence-Coolidge area. Two alternative corridor definitions in the Florence and Coolidge area were recommended for further consideration. *Working Paper No. 3* presents an analysis of the alternatives and recommended a corridor definition for the North-South corridor in the Florence and Coolidge area.

An open house was held at Central Arizona College on June 21, 2006 to provide information and to gain public input on the corridor definition recommended in *Working Paper No. 3*. The Open House was held on Wednesday June 21, 2006 from 5:30-7:30 pm in Coolidge, AZ at Central Arizona College located at 8470 N. Overfield Road. Approximately 100 people participated in this Open House. This report summarizes information presented and input received at the open house.

2. NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS / COVERAGE

Newspaper advertisements were placed in the following newspapers to notify the public of the Open Houses:

- Florence Blade Reminder, June 8, 2006
- Casa Grande Dispatch, June 7, 2006
- Coolidge Examiner, June 7, 2006

The advertisements ran in the above-mentioned papers in early June, two weeks prior to the Open House. In keeping with the requirements of Title VI, Open House advertisements provided an opportunity for persons with disabilities to request accommodations prior to the meetings.

After the open house, several newspaper articles were featured in local newspapers. For samples of the newspaper Open House advertisements and newspaper coverage, please refer to **Appendix A**.

3. NOTIFICATION BY MAIL

A notification advertisement was mailed to the project's mailing list. This list, compiled since the beginning of the three corridor definition studies, has approximately 850 interested parties. The mailing notification was sent to the project mailing list on June 6, 2006, approximately two weeks prior to the Open House. Please see **Appendix B** for the open house sample flyer.



4. PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

The open house was held on June 21, 2006. Members of ADOT Transportation Planning Division staff, ADOT Communication and Community Partnerships staff, the project technical advisory committee, the consultant team, and local government officials were present at the open house.

The open house followed a presentation format followed by a public question and answer session. The remainder of the meeting was an open format where attendees could view the project displays and speak one-on-one with project team members. Please see **Appendix C** for the samples of material presented and distributed at the open house.

Comment forms were also available for attendees to submit written comments. A summary of written comments submitted from the Open Houses is provided in **Appendix D** of this report.

Section 4.1 contains a summary of the presentation given by ADOT and the project team. Section 4.2 contains a summary of questions posed by attendees, as well as the response provided by the project team members.

4.1 Overview Presentation Summary

The open house followed a similar format as those previously held during the Corridor Definition Studies – a presentation was made by ADOT staff followed by a public question and answer session. The remainder of the meeting followed an open format where attendees could view the project displays and speak one-on-one with project team members.

Key points that were expressed by ADOT staff during the open house presentation include:

- Despite what has been stated in newspaper headlines, ADOT has not yet selected a final corridor for the corridor definition study. Newspaper articles stating that ADOT has selected a final corridor are not accurate. It is true that recommendations are being developed. However, these recommendations will be presented to the public before they are finalized.
- The corridor definition process began in 2004 when ADOT started looking at four different corridors: US 60, Williams Gateway, North South corridor, and east-west (Hunt Highway corridor). On February 17, 2006 the State Transportation Board stated that they endorse the recommendations the presented to them.
- The corporation commission sited a 500 kV line providing additional alternatives for the corridor definition. Thus two alternatives in the Florence and Coolidge area were identified. Thus, ADOT analyzed in further detail the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative. ADOT spoke with local jurisdictions, SRP, and major stakeholders to get their input. The purpose of tonight's open house is to present what was learned through this stakeholder outreach process and to get additional input from the public.
- A freeway corridor will not work without a mature arterial roadway network. ADOT must work with the local jurisdictions to make the system work.
- A future Location/Design Concept Report (L/DCR) will document in detail the environmental issues, alignment opportunities and alternatives, and public and political input and involvement. Funding for a L/DCR for the North-South corridor will likely be available in 2007.

The PowerPoint presentation that was made at the open house is provided in **Appendix C**.



4.2 Public Question and Answer Session

Table 1 is a summary of the questions, comments, and responses from the Open House. **Figure 1** is photography taken at the Open House.

Table 1 – Questions, Comments and Responses from Open House

Comment/Question	ADOT Response
Did the recommendations approved by the State Transportation Board include a recommendation to widen existing state corridors from 4 lanes to 6 lanes?	The recommendations approved by the State Transportation Board in February 2006 included the recommendation to widen state highways. However, the number of lanes that each highway would be widened to is not yet determined.
Did ADOT meet with the people who live in Valley Farms to get their input?	ADOT has not met with individual citizens in Valley Farms. These citizen groups have attended past open houses. Additional citizen input will be obtained at this open house.
Was consideration given to the retirement communities located just north of Florence (Florence Gardens)	Communities such as Florence Gardens were considered in the corridor definition recommendation. The corridor definition includes an approximately 1-mile wide corridor. A future alignment study will analyze the impacts in greater detail, follow the NEPA process, and recommend a specific alignment. It is during the alignment study that we have the opportunity to meet with owner groups, etc. These studies will have extensive public input.
How close to the SRP (Salt River Project 500 kV lines can a freeway be constructed?	SRP can engineer the power lines to accommodate an adjacent freeway. SRP has been granted a corridor that is 1100 feet wide. They will only use a fraction of this corridor (less than 200 feet). Most people feel that a power is less impactful than a freeway corridor and a power line can be better mitigated than can a freeway.
Is the green line depicted on the in the recommendations approved by the State Transportation Board the 'new' US 60 or the existing US 60.	The green line shown in the recommendations show the general vicinity of the proposed new US 60 reroute.
Does SRP know if the power line will be located on the west side or the east side of the CAP?	The SRP corridor is located on the west side of the CAP. They are currently conducting an engineering and alignment study for the utility line.
It will be several years until the bypass is constructed. Will the current roadway infrastructure be able to accommodate all of the new people that will move into the area until the new corridors can be constructed?	ADOT is currently funding several Small Area Transportation Studies (SATS) to help local jurisdictions identify improvements that are needed to accommodate the projected traffic. Providing sufficient roadway infrastructure will require a partnership between ADOT and the local jurisdictions.



Table 1 – Questions, Comments and Responses from Open House (continued)

Comment/Question	ADOT Response
<p>What is the anticipated time frame for the North-South corridor south of SR-287? Is it not in the 30-year time frame, whereas the North-South corridor located north of 287 is anticipated to be constructed sooner?</p>	<p>The purple lines in the State Transportation Board Recommendations, including the North-South corridor south of SR 287, are anticipated to be constructed later than the other corridors. However, if needs change schedules can be adjusted. ADOT corridor and area profiles are performed on a regular basis to confirm needs.</p>
<p>The SR 77/SR-79 corridor is important for mobility between Phoenix and Tucson. The corridors should be placed on Arizona State Trust Land. The North-South corridor should be located east of SR-79. Environmental concerns will be significant. More communication is needed between ADOT and the elected officials.</p>	<p>No response. Comment recorded.</p>
<p>'Alternative 2' (corridor definition that passes through State Trust Land, is located near SR-79, and thus impacts fewer master planned communities) appears to be the path of least resistance. However, it appears that master planned communities will be dissected anyway by the SRP line. Why is it a good transportation practice to locate the arterials and the freeway so close to one another?</p>	<p>Parallel roadway systems complement one another and the future freeway system. Both arterials and freeways are needed.</p>
<p>Please prioritize current residents over future residents.</p>	<p>No response. Comment recorded.</p>
<p>There appears to be a lot of flexibility for a decision in the future. Are there potential points of collaboration with Superstition Vistas?</p>	<p>Yes. An example is SR 179 in Sedona. Local residents were very involved and influential. Once the Design Concept Report begins, it will take 2 to 3 years at a minimum to complete.</p>
<p>After the alignment is determined, is there a plan to procure right of way in advance of construction.</p>	<p>It must be remembered that local communities have a greater opportunity to preserve corridors and to set land aside for future corridor development. Pinal County is growing rapidly and will continue to grow rapidly in the future. One of the key considerations is land use compatibility. It is much more difficult to put a transportation facility in a built out environment. Pinal County has a unique opportunity to work with Arizona State Land Department to define future corridors.</p>
<p>As funding for these corridors has not been identified, toll roads should be considered.</p>	<p>Toll roads have been identified as a possible source of funding. Currently, these roads are not being recommended as toll roads.</p>



5. COMMENTS RECEIVED

Comment cards were distributed to all attendees upon sign-in. Participants were encouraged to fill out a comment form with any questions or comments they had concerning the study. A comment box was available at the open house to collect the comment forms at the end of the presentation. Approximately 22 comment cards were returned. **Appendix D** contains a sample comment card.

Comments that were received can be separated into three categories: those that support the recommended corridor definition; those that support a connection to SR-79; and general comments regarding the corridor definition. The following sections provide a summary of comments that were submitted to the project team.

5.1 Comments Received in Support of Corridor Definition Recommendation

- I think the proposed route through Coolidge is excellent. It will benefit an area that has been neglected and provide ingress/egress to a growing area to move the population. Thanks for making a wise choice.
- I support the corridor that is presented by ADOT on June 21, 2006. The corridor that runs from Apache Junction to Valley Farms Road south is the best route for numerous reasons. Future development, less disruption, better planning for central AZ. Cities, cost and easement issues, running along same corridor as SRP line, utilization of Coolidge Airport and consideration of growth from Pima County north are all reason to support this corridor. I feel ADOT has taken all known factors into consideration and presented the most logical route. I am an elected official. I represent the citizens of Coolidge who support this route.
- Though City of Coolidge representatives did not speak at the open house on 6-21-06, the City Council unanimously supports the corridor as presented at this meeting. We will pass a resolution on 6-26-06 in support and forward it to you after it is signed.
- Pulte Homes, a large landowner in the affected area, strongly endorses the recommended North-South corridor as depicted on exhibit 2 handed out in the ADOT Open House on 6-21-06.
- The presentation was very informative and looks like it should help move traffic.
- This was in excellent presentation and I understand the layers of decision making now.
- I support the recommendations of this study, which were reached through a reasonable process.
- I like the plan in the desert, by the canal. Not on Schnepf Road as suggested by the AZ Republic. Build it sooner than later.
- We need a North-South Corridor from Apache Junction to Highway 287 and then down to tie into I-10/I-8 in as straight a line as possible, so as to save driving time. Makes no sense to tie into Hwy 79, as this is a bottleneck already. May have to channel the Gila River to narrow the bridge. Also need to work on Hwy 60 from Florence Jct. to Superior.
- We are in trouble NOW in terms of moving people North & South – I appreciate and support the Green Corridor but trust ongoing meetings and feedback will be solicited as the “real” line gets closer to being drawn. Please continue to help municipalities and Pinal County figure out how to widen current arterials.

5.2 Comments Received in Support of Connection to SR-79

- I prefer the north-east alignment for the North-South Freeway Options, tying into Highway #79. This alignment would cause less disruption to existing residences.



- In my opinion the road that intersects Hwy 79 but the road could go east on Arizona Farms Rd. to 79. The road as it is presented would go over Arizona Farms Road and intersects with 79 first a few miles south of Arizona Farms Road. The road going to SR 287 goes thru Merrill Ranch development – not good.

5.3 General Comments

- If you must adopt the N-S corridor, please keep it as far away from the 55+ communities just north of Florence (approx. 4,000 people in several parks that have been around over 30 years). We will be sandwiched (with dirty air and noise) between 2 highways!
- It appears Exhibit 2 is the path of least resistance, especially from developers. Why is it sensible to move away from population center? The 500k line ROW will bisect and limit some residential development. Who pays for the 3+ mile arterials to the Exhibit 2 plan? I see bottlenecks as the population moves to/from freeway.
- Going east of development provides “good enough” service?. Good enough? What is wrong with the “best service”? Why would you not bisect development once rather than hem in development and/or bisect twice if AZ lets lands to the east of the Green open for development?
- My biggest concern is that the current home and landowners are not being considered or communicated with in this decision process. Please do not recommend the corridor to run on or adjacent to Schnepf Road or the existing homes near it.
- NO TOLL ROADS!!
- Please start to widen the existing Hwy's so we can keep the flow going until we can get the new Hwy. Thank you!
- Since I live in Florence Gardens, I'd urge more consideration of preserving buffers from currently developed land use and the proposed highway rather than accommodating master planned communities.
- The expansion of Hwy 287 between Coolidge and Florence seems to be very important. Highway 87 between Coolidge and Chandler should also be expanded. This expansion could accommodate a lot of traffic. Freeway corridor should still be planned.
- I am interested in public meeting closer to U.S. 60 or Schnepf Road area. I am very interested if Castlegate Community is affected. I couldn't attend the Pinal County meeting. Who would I contact to find out about this? How far east will this corridor run?



ADDENDUM

Following the June 2006 open house at Central Arizona College, two additional events were held at which the study's preliminary recommendations were made available to the public. A summary of these events follows.

Work Session, Town of Florence, July 24, 2006

A work session of the Mayor and Council of the Town of Florence was held at 6:00 p.m. on July 24, 2006 in the Town Hall Council Chambers, 775 N. Main Street, Florence, Arizona. The Work Session was posted by the Town of Florence as a public meeting. Mayor Tom Rankin, five Council members, and approximately 75 citizens were present.

John Pein of the ADOT Transportation Planning Division presented draft recommendations of the North-South Corridor Options Study. Maps depicting the draft corridor were distributed to all present. The recommendations were consistent with those presented at the June open house. Mr. Pein provided background information on the study process leading to the identification of the draft corridor, and described the next steps that would be taken:

- In the fall of 2006, the State Transportation Board will consider the approval of the corridor and its adoption into the MoveAZ Long-Range Transportation Plan.
- The development of Location/Design Concept Report will begin in the summer of 2007. The study will evaluate in detail a minimum of three alternative locations plus a no-build scenario, and select the alignment (actual location) for the potential freeway.
- At this time no funds have been identified for construction or for the purchase of right-of-way for the freeway.

The Mayor and Council members posed questions and offered comments to ADOT staff:

- Preference for locating the potential freeway east of SR 79 was voiced by the Mayor and three Council members because of their reluctance to physically divide the community and wedge the residents of Florence Gardens mobile home park between a freeway and a state highway.
- One Councilmember expressed understanding of the need for a freeway located west of SR 79 because of its ability to serve a greater number of residents.
- The desire to widen SR 79 in the immediate future was also stated.

A Call to the Public was issued. The eight comments that were expressed centered on the following concerns:

- Many Florence Gardens residents do not wish to see a widened SR 79 immediately east and a new freeway immediately west of the mobile home park.
- Many Florence Gardens residents support the Mayor's suggestion to locate the potential new freeway east of SR 79.



- Other concerns included: archaeological and cultural resources exist in abundance in the Florence area; a north-south freeway would divide the community; developers' needs were considered above those of current residents.

Open House, City of Coolidge, August 30, 2006

Following the work session in Florence a decision was made to conduct one additional open house prior to the conclusion of the study. The public was notified through newspaper advertisements and a flyer distributed by mail. The open house was held at the City of Coolidge Council Chambers. A slide presentation, display boards, and an information sheet described recommendations that were consistent with those presented at the June open house at Central Arizona College.

The following written comments were received:

- I support the green corridor proposed. Moving it further east will not be very useful to Coolidge residents traveling north. The proposed route will enhance both economies. "Bedroom communities" may not be the goal but those that need to commute need some relief in getting to the Valley.
- The road connecting to 287 would be the best route because it would better service both Coolidge and Florence. This is a central location for both communities to include Eloy. If you move it to 79 then it will pretty much serve only Florence. Where the green ribbon is -- is the best central location.
- The green ribbon best serves the area to the south. The connection to I-10 should be east of the Highway 87 / I-10 intersection. Alternatives between Tucson and the Picacho exit need to be established.
- I support the corridor that runs through Valley Farms. This corridor does the most for the entire region. This route will benefit Coolidge, Florence and surrounding communities. It is necessary to establish these corridors for smart growth for cities and developers. This route makes the most sense and benefits the majority of people in central Arizona. Coolidge's growth is to the west. Those people will have to drive through Coolidge and Florence to get to the freeway. This will create a large problem. Placing this corridor with the power line easement will be the least disruptive route for central Arizona citizens. Please select the green route on the map through Valley Farms.
- I support the green ribbon, it makes perfect sense.
- I would like to see the ribbon more to the west. We already have to go to 79 to get to 60. go through the new developments – they should anticipate the highway. Putting a highway in should increase property values.
- What's the least cost should be the way the route should be built, taxpayer monies at hand.
- If the recommended corridor option as displayed is a guide, then the green route as shown would be the best route. This would serve the people of the area and both Coolidge and Florence. The cost of construction would be less. The proposed route off Highway 79 makes no sense and would not serve the population of the area.
- We urge ADOT to move forward with the green alignment.
- My husband and I both support the route of the green ribbon. Our hope is that it will be completed as soon as possible, not years and years down the road.
- The green line does represent the best option for both Coolidge and Florence.



- We strongly support the proposed north-south corridor. We urge ADOT to go forth. Keep up the hard work to improve transportation access for southern Arizona.
- Why do we want to travel to the east when we desire to go to say, Chandler? What is going to be done with Hwy 87? It is over taxed now west of Coolidge. It is now very dangerous with the increase of traffic flow in recent years. I agree that change needs to happen but it seems like the green ribbon is the long way around.
- I support the “Recommended General Location” (Green Corridor) and further support the more southerly direct option, completely bypassing a direct connection to Hwy 79. Using Hwy 79 for any leg of the new freeway diminishes its value as a new additional roadway. Hwy 79 will have its own stress in handling new traffic in the area it serves. I urge ADOT to keep the new freeway separate from any portion of Hwy 79.
- The proposed route down to 287 appears acceptable. My only concern would be whether or not the road could be moved west to reduce miles of road constructed. We need this road for economic development of the region.
- What ever happened to Hunt Highway? Why can’t that be widened or is it too late? While this route makes sense, the Hunt Highway would have made more sense.

The following oral comments were received:

- Tom Shope, Mayor of Coolidge: “The recommendation of the corridor option studied adjacent to Coolidge is generally consistent with proposed development plans and the city’s long-term goals for the area.”
- Jon Thompson, Vice-Mayor of Coolidge: “I feel the recommended route will serve the greater good for the most citizens in central Arizona.”
- Tom Rankin, Mayor of Florence: “The proceedings are moving along too fast. The Town of Florence and the City of Coolidge have yet to see the final results of their own Small Area Transportation Studies. The proposed route would benefit Maricopa County by shuttling the work force out of Pinal County, turning Florence and Coolidge into bedroom communities. Local residents who stand to be affected by the transportation corridor have not been properly consulted by ADOT. Developers are dictating the route of the corridor because they have the money.”
- Robert Flatley, Coolidge City Manager: “We have developers in the audience who have promised to set aside a corridor. We’re trying to prevent the state from having to pay through the nose for development in a corridor. You have to think ahead, you have to move ahead. You’ve done a great job, you’ve held a lot of meetings and gotten a lot of input.”
- Alton Bruce, Coolidge Economic Development Director: “One of the absolutely critical components of the economic development of this area is improving transportation access. If we start manufacturing things here, we need roads to get them to the Valley to sell them to people up there.”
- Frank Ashford, Coolidge: “What we have to look at is what is best for both Coolidge and Florence. By the time this project is done or even started, half of us won’t be here. The decisions that we’re looking at, we’re making for the generations to come.”



APPENDIX