



WICKENBURG BYPASS UPDATE

MARCH 2002

US 93 – WICKENBURG TO SANTA MARIA RIVER

This newsletter is the fourth in a series of informational bulletins designed to update the public on the progress of the US 93 – Wickenburg to Santa Maria River Location/Design Concept Study being conducted by the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and its engineering consultant, Sverdrup Civil, Inc. The study will determine the optimum location and design concept for a proposed US 93 bypass southwest of Wickenburg and the widening of 35 miles of US 93 north of town. This bulletin also addresses the alternatives for a proposed interim solution that would relieve downtown congestion until the long-term “ultimate” US 93 bypass is completed.

MEETING OVERVIEW

A Public Information Meeting was held at the Wickenburg Community Center on December 5, 2001, to update the public on the status of the Wickenburg bypass study and to obtain public input on the preferred design concept for the proposed US 93 interim improvement.

The meeting began with an explanation of how the study had progressed since the previous public meeting on August 22, 2000. The latest study findings were presented, including a detailed discussion on the status of the US 93 bypass study and the interim improvement alternatives being considered.

Five alternatives were described as the remaining candidates for an interim improvement project to relieve existing congestion in Wickenburg prior to construction of the ultimate US 93 bypass southwest of town. These options included Alternatives 7, 13, 14, 15, and 16. Alternative 16 was presented as the preferred alternative.

The meeting was then opened for 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 local citizens, Wickenburg officials, members of the Wickenburg Chamber of Commerce, representatives of citizens’ groups, and business owners.

Most oral comments were regarding the interim improvement alternatives. Fifteen people stated their support for Alternative 16. Suggestions for modifications to Alternative 16 included adding a connector to Bralliar Road to provide direct access to the hospital; moving the roadway east to lessen impacts on residences along the west side of the new right-of-way (R/W); adjusting the tie-in at the northern terminus; designing for a 100-year flood; designating the existing roadway as a business loop; providing adequate signage for businesses; and maintaining the existing Hassayampa bridges. One person voiced objections to Alternative 16 due to its impact on businesses in the North Tegner Street commercial area.

Concerns about Alternative 16 included impacts on businesses, acquisition of private property, 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, due to concerns about traffic congestion, pedestrian safety, and access to the hospital and surrounding neighborhoods.

Comments on the ultimate US 93 bypass southwest of Wickenburg focused on impacts on the Morristown community. Speakers suggested moving the bypass alignment south to avoid residential and wildlife areas or improving the existing US 60 roadway south of Wickenburg along the Hassayampa River. Another concern voiced about the ultimate bypass was Wickenburg’s ability to compete for funding for such a large-scale project.

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 inside.



BYPASS STUDY UPDATE

At the August 2000 public information meeting, the findings of the initial analysis of several Wickenburg bypass alignments were presented. The Southwest and Far West bypass corridors were described as the most appropriate

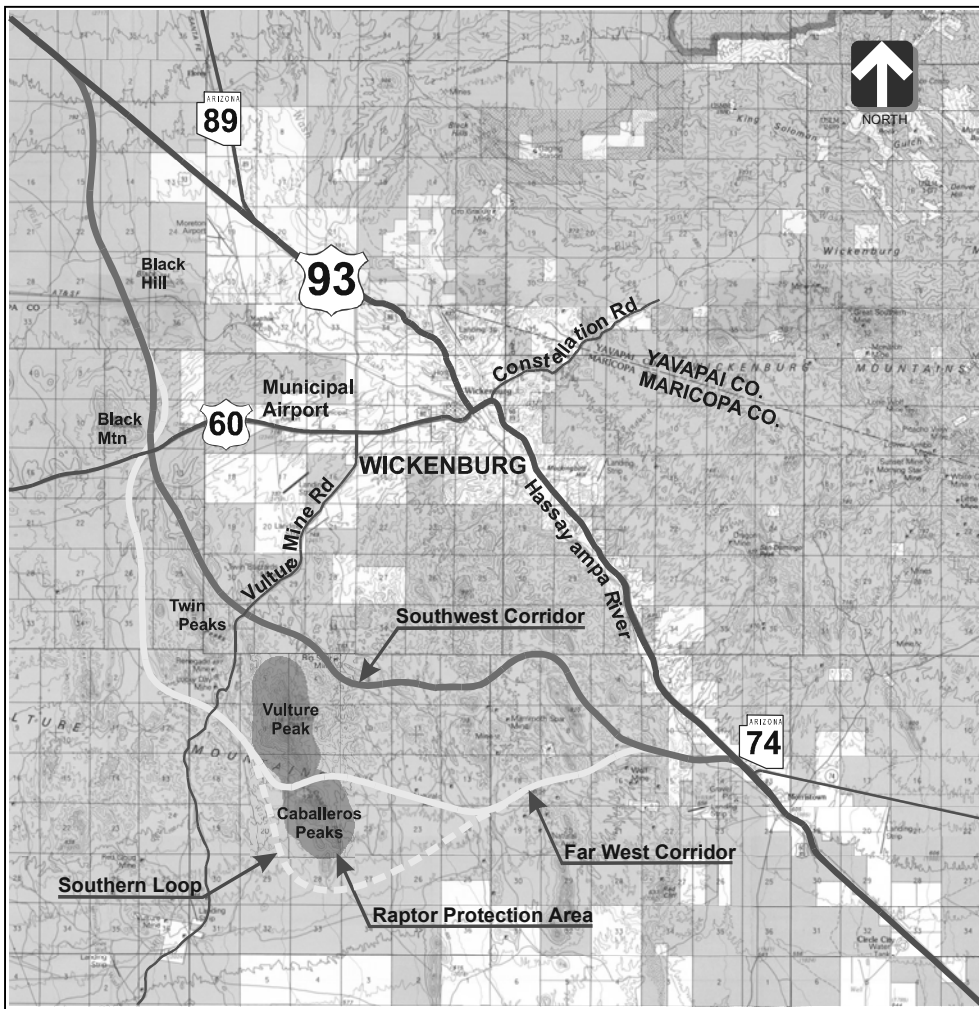


FIGURE 1 – WICKENBURG BYPASS CORRIDORS

for a bypass, with the Far West being the preferred option.

Subsequent to the public meeting, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) found that the Far West Corridor would pass through a protected area that surrounds the cliff areas of Vulture Peak and Caballeros Peaks. This area, labeled on Figure 1 as a Raptor Protection Area (RPA), was established by the BLM in 1983 to protect the nesting habitat of the prairie falcon, golden eagle, barn owl, and great horned owl.

Without a change to the BLM’s plan, the Far West alternative cannot be considered a feasible alternative. If ADOT were to proceed with the corridor selection process at this time, the Far West Corridor would have to be dropped from further consideration, resulting in the selection of the Southwest Corridor by default. However, the Study Team feels that the Far West Corridor should be fully analyzed, due to the public support for that route and the advantages that the Far West offers in comparison to the Southwest Corridor. Another consideration is that the ultimate location of the proposed Canamex Corridor, which has not yet been resolved, could influence the alignment and selection of the bypass route.

In order to consider a transportation corridor across the RPA, the BLM would need to initiate a proposal to amend the current land use management plan. Before the BLM will agree to begin the amendment process, the agency

must have a compelling reason to justify the change. Therefore, ADOT has agreed to prepare a detailed Feasibility Report regarding the various bypass routes, including a new Southern Loop, as a basis for the BLM to consider revisiting the RPA designation status.

Regardless of whether or not the BLM amends their land use plan, continued consideration of a bypass route will take considerable time to complete. With the Canamex Corridor Study lagging well behind the bypass study, and with the uncertainty regarding a transportation corridor through the RPA, not enough information is available at this time to clearly define the ultimate bypass route. ADOT is committed to developing the Wickenburg bypass; however, a final decision on the route selection will now be several years in the future.

INTERIM IMPROVEMENT UPDATE

At the August 2000 public information 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 ultimate US 93 bypass. Of the alignments considered, Alternatives 7 and 13 were presented as the two options with the most potential. The ensuing input from the public indicated that additional work was necessary to arrive at an alternative that could be recommended.

Since that meeting, three additional alternatives, numbers 14, 15, and 16, have been developed and evaluated. Alternative 16 was presented on December 5, 2001, as the preferred alternative. The primary reasons for preferring Alternative 16 are:

- Its terminus north of the APS substation would remove regional traffic farther from downtown Wickenburg than the other alternatives, thereby having the most beneficial effect upon local air quality, safety, and traffic operations.
- It would be located farther away from residential communities between Coffinger Park and the Super 8 Motel, reducing potential noise impacts on these neighborhoods. In addition, Alternative 16 (Figure 2) would minimize potential impacts on community cohesion, neighborhood character, and visual quality of the area by avoiding direct intrusions into these residential areas.

(Continued on last page)

- It would avoid separating the existing commercial development on Tegner Street at the northern town limit from existing and potential commercial development immediately to the south. As a result, it would maintain the continuity of the commercial district and accommodate future growth.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- The development of the final design concept for Alternative 16 will continue.
- An Initial Design Concept Report and a Draft EA will be prepared for the interim improvement project. These documents will be made available to the public this spring, followed by a public hearing where the final recommendations will be presented.
- The development of the design concept and Draft EA for the widening of US 93 north of Wickenburg will continue. A public information meeting will be conducted soon regarding the northern section.
- Continue updates via newsletters and our web site.
- A Morristown community meeting will be held this spring to discuss issues of interest to local residents.

NEED MORE INFORMATION? CONTACT:

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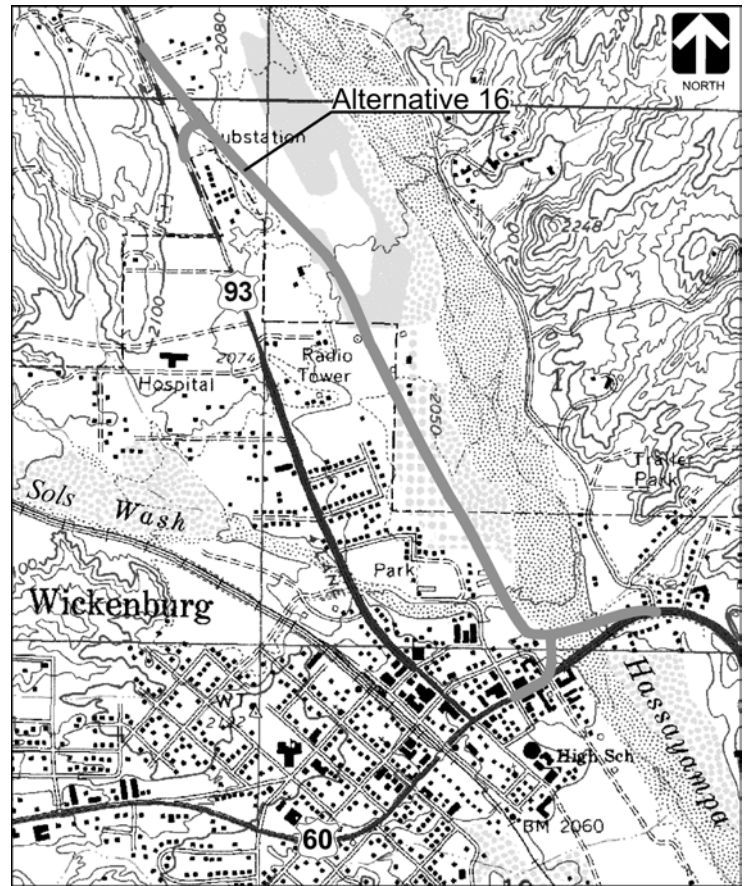


FIGURE 2 – PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE 16

**VISIT THE US 93 – WICKENBURG TO
 SANTA MARIA RIVER WEB SITE!**

<http://www.wickenburg.civilnet.sverdrup.com>



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 Tempe, AZ 85284

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- Wickenburg Bypass Update
- Interim Improvement Update
- Notes and Comments from the December Public Meeting

COMMENT SHEET SUMMARY

Comment sheets with a brief questionnaire were handed out at the December 5 meeting. The questions are listed and numbers of responses are tallied below. Forty-six comment sheets were turned in; however, not all respondents replied to every question.

Regarding the ultimate bypass southwest of Wickenburg:

Do you support a continued investigation of a bypass corridor through the Raptor Protection Area to determine if the Far West Route is feasible? Yes.....19 No.....18

Even if it adds several years to the study? Yes.....16 No.....7

Would you be willing to support the Southwest bypass route and eliminate the Far West bypass route so that the study could be completed earlier? Yes.....15 No.....23

Please note any additional comments, issues, and/or concerns about the Wickenburg bypass.

Build the Far West bypass as soon as possible.....6	Avoid developing areas..... 1
Add a southern loop to avoid the RPA..... 5	Need independent study of RPA..... 1
Plan the bypass according to the Canamex proposal...4	ADOT is stalling on the bypass in favor of the interim... 1
Prefer the interim over the ultimate bypass..... 2	Need bypass before 15-20 years..... 1
Impacts to wildlife/RPA..... 2	Preserve town character..... 1
Build the bypass as a toll road..... 1	Support Far West route..... 1
Get NAFTA funding for bypass..... 1	

Regarding the interim improvement project:

Do you support Alternative 16 as the preferred concept? Yes.....30 No.....8

If not, what are your concerns?

Flooding.....4	Air pollution..... 2	Will become a permanent bypass... 1
Noise.....3	Opposed to any interim project..... 2	How soon can it be built..... 1
Visual impacts..... 3	Traffic congestion.....2	Damage to downtown..... 1
Impacts on businesses..... 3	Environment..... 1	Will delay funding for bypass..... 1
Impacts on residences..... 2	Hassayampa River..... 1	

If you support Alternative 16, do you have any suggestions that could improve the concept?

Design roadway for 100-year flood.....2	Add exits to businesses..... 1
Design for 50-year flood to avoid levee look.....2	Maintain the old Hassayampa bridge..... 1
Add an access road from the hospital or connector at Bralliar Road..... 2	Move the northern terminus south..... 1
Move roadway east to avoid residential areas.....2	Plan flood mitigation with adjacent property owners..... 1
Provide signage for businesses..... 1	Do not need hospital access road..... 1
Make Tegner Street a business loop..... 1	Avoid the Community Center..... 1
	Only needs two lanes..... 1

Please note any additional comments, issues, and/or concerns about the Interim Improvement Project.

Build it as soon as possible.....5	Do not add connection at Bralliar Road..... 1
Oppose interim project..... 2	New development on North Tegner..... 1
Design for a 50-year flood to avoid levee look..... 2	Protect Hassayampa River water quality..... 1
Will delay or eliminate ultimate bypass..... 2	Traffic congestion at signals..... 1
Make as attractive as possible..... 1	Meter traffic into downtown..... 1
Use the old bridge to enter downtown..... 1	Buildings close to roadway..... 1
Support Alternative 10 or 12 instead..... 1	Encroaches on floodplain..... 1
Get funding and complete by 2005..... 1	