

LOOP 202  
*South Mountain*  
Freeway

# South Mountain Freeway FEIS/ROD Reevaluation

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in Maricopa County, Arizona



Federal Highway Administration

**ADOT**

Arizona Department of Transportation

**February 18, 2016**

Federal-aid Project Number: NH-202-D(ADY)

ADOT Project Number: 202L MA 054 H5764 01D

# Record of Decision

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February 18, 2016

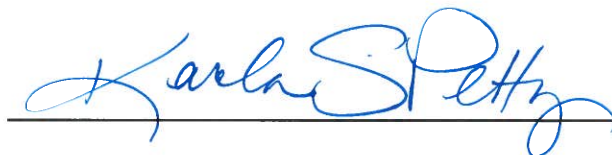
The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in coordination with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), reevaluated the South Mountain Freeway, Interstate 10 (I-10, Papago Freeway) to I-10 (Maricopa Freeway) Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision (ROD) per 23 Code of Federal Regulations § 771.129 to address proposed scope items (Elwood Street pedestrian bridge and Durango Street connector) to be added to the project since the approval of the ROD on March 5, 2015. FHWA, with concurrence from ADOT, has determined that no substantial changes have occurred in the social, economic, or environmental impacts of the proposed action that would substantially impact the quality of the human, socioeconomic, or natural environment. Therefore, the original environmental document remains valid for the proposed action. It is recommended that the project identified herein be advanced to the next phase of project development.



Dallas Hammit, PE  
State Engineer  
Arizona Department of Transportation



Date



Karla S. Petty  
Arizona Division Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration



Date

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# 1. Introduction and Project Description

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The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in coordination with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), conducted a reevaluation of the South Mountain Freeway, Interstate 10 (I-10, Papago Freeway) to I-10 (Maricopa Freeway) Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) per 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 771.129 to address scope items that have been added to the project since the approval of the ROD on March 5, 2015. This reevaluation document provides an overview of the freeway project, describes the proposed scope items, assesses the environmental consequences of the proposed scope items, describes past and future public and agency outreach, and presents a conclusion related to the inclusion of the proposed scope items in the freeway project.

## Project Location

ADOT is the sponsor of the construction and operation of the South Mountain Freeway. The freeway will constitute a section of the Regional Freeway and Highway System, the Loop 202 (also referred to as State Route 202L). The project is in the southwestern portion of the Phoenix metropolitan area in Maricopa County, Arizona (see Figure 1). The approximately 22-mile-long freeway will be constructed as an eight-lane divided, access-controlled facility, with four travel lanes in each direction. Three lanes will be for general purpose use and one lane will be dedicated to high-occupancy vehicle use.

## Approved Environmental Documentation

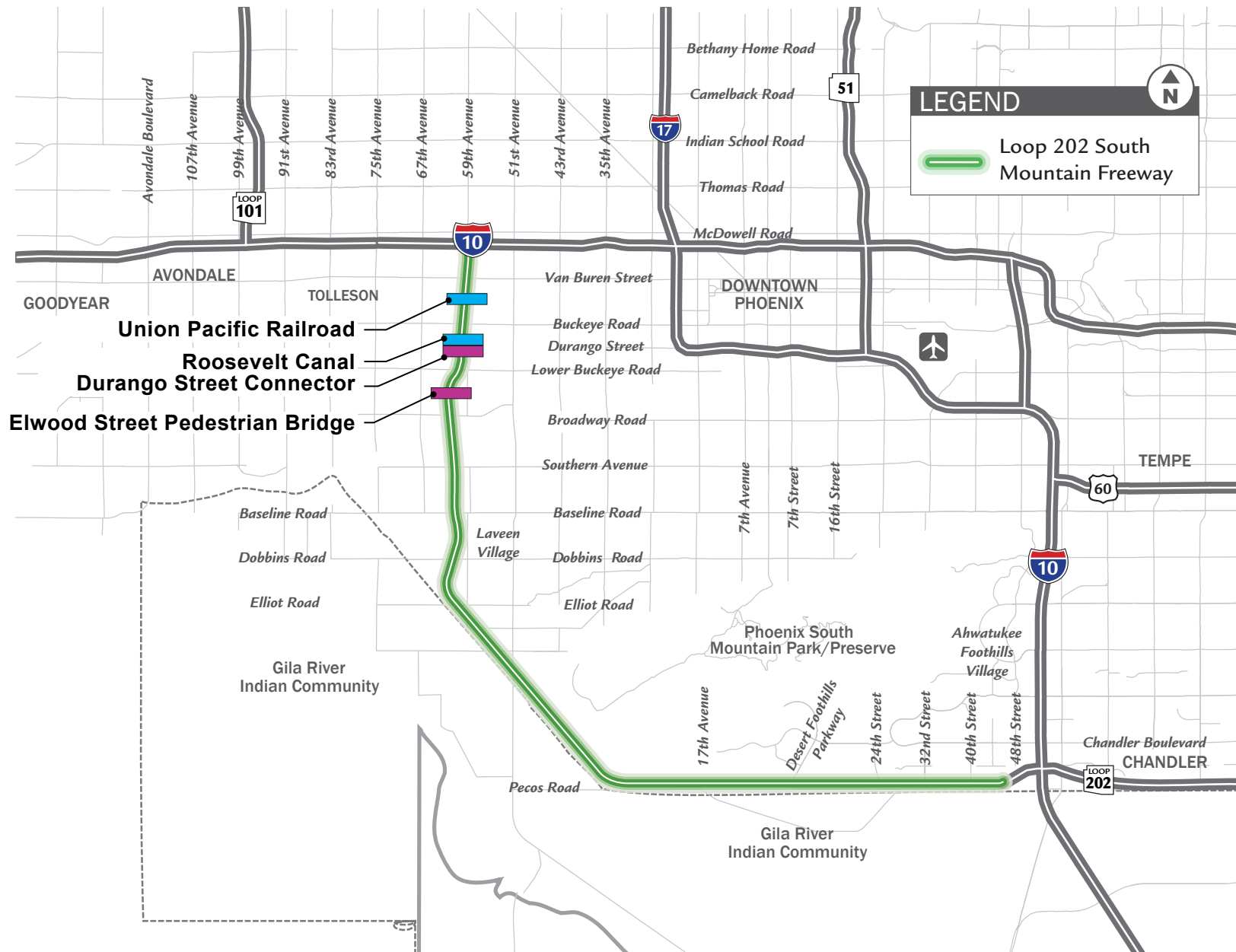
The approved environmental documentation completed by ADOT, the project sponsor, and FHWA, the lead federal agency, included:

- ▶ Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) signed on April 16, 2013, and released to the public on April 26, 2013.
- ▶ FEIS signed on September 18, 2014, and released to the public on September 26, 2014.
- ▶ Errata to the FEIS signed on November 19, 2014 and released to the public on November 28, 2014 (the Errata was published to address public comments on the DEIS that were inadvertently omitted from the FEIS).
- ▶ ROD signed on March 5, 2015, and released to the public on March 13, 2015.

## Previously Identified Impacts

The FEIS and ROD present a detailed description of anticipated impacts related to the Selected Alternative. Key elements include:

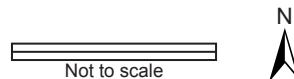
- ▶ The project will convert approximately 1,813 acres of land to a transportation use.



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Figure 1

Key Map



February 1, 2016

- ▶ The project is consistent with local and regional plans; however, it will introduce visual and noise intrusion adjacent to residential neighborhoods.
- ▶ Implementation of the project in the Western Section will result in adverse impacts on populations protected under Title VI and the environmental justice Executive Order; impacts will not, however, be disproportionately high or cause undue hardship when compared with such impacts on the general population.
- ▶ The project will result in the displacement of approximately 168 single-family homes, two apartment complexes with 680 total units, and 42 businesses.
- ▶ The City of Phoenix will experience an inconsequential reduction of annual property and sales tax revenue due to the conversion of land to a transportation use. Travel time savings for motorists in the region after completion of the project will be over \$200 million per year (in 2013 dollars).
- ▶ The project will not result in any exceedances of the health-based National Ambient Air Quality Standards.
- ▶ The project will require the placement of noise barriers in selected locations to reduce noise to levels that meet ADOT policy and FHWA regulations.
- ▶ The project will affect up to 121 water wells and 94 acres of floodplains.
- ▶ The project will impact Waters of the United States and require appropriate permitting approvals from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).
- ▶ The project will not affect any currently listed threatened and endangered species. However, the project will result in the conversion of cover, nesting areas, and food resources for wildlife provided by the natural plant communities found in the Study Area. The project will create a physical barrier that could, depending on design, decrease movement of wildlife to and from the South Mountains and Sierra Estrella. In response, multifunctional crossing locations have been identified to provide habitat connectivity under the freeway.
- ▶ The project will affect a number of National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-eligible sites including: prehistoric village sites (the extent of these impacts would be determined by subsequent testing); crossings of the Roosevelt Canal and historic Southern Pacific Railroad (the crossings will not affect the NRHP eligibility of the sites); and the South Mountains Traditional Cultural Property.
- ▶ The project will convert 723 acres of prime and unique farmlands to a transportation use.
- ▶ The project will interact with five high-priority hazardous materials sites.
- ▶ Impacts on views from residential and rural uses include construction impacts, new traffic interchanges, and visibility of the new facility. Impacts will not change the low-to-moderate visual quality of views along the freeway.
- ▶ The project will provide benefits related to regional energy consumption.
- ▶ The project will result in the direct use of resources in the South Mountains afforded protection by Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966. There is no

feasible and prudent alternative that avoids use of the South Mountains.

## Public and Agency Involvement

ADOT and FHWA undertook an extensive public and agency involvement program during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) phase of the project. Key elements included:

- ▶ Publication of the Notice of Intent on April 20, 2001, in the *Federal Register* (66[77]:20345).
- ▶ Invitations sent in 2001 to USACE, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to be cooperating agencies were issued. USACE and BIA agreed to be federal cooperating agencies. EPA and USFWS declined. In 2009, the Western Area Power Administration (Western) was invited, and agreed, to be a cooperating agency.
- ▶ Agency scoping letters were sent to 232 federal, State, and local agencies in October 2001. A 2-day agency scoping meeting was held later that month in Phoenix. Agencies were invited to participate in the project through monthly progress meetings during the project duration.
- ▶ Public scoping was initiated in November 2001 and included presentations at 23 neighborhood meetings and two public meetings.
- ▶ Between the public scoping kick-off through the release of the DEIS, over 200 presentations were made to neighborhood groups, homeowners' associations, chambers of commerce, village planning committees, trade associations, and other interested parties. Twelve public meetings were held.
- ▶ ADOT created a Citizens Advisory Team (CAT) made up of groups and organizations in the Study Area. The CAT worked as a voluntary, advisory team to provide advice and input to ADOT and FHWA. Approximately 60 CAT meetings were held, each open to the public.
- ▶ The DEIS was released to the public on April 26, 2013, beginning the 90-day comment period (the minimum requirement under NEPA is 45 days). A public hearing was held May 21, 2013, at the Phoenix Convention Center from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Six community forums were held in Study Area communities to supplement the public hearing. Additionally, an online public hearing was created for those who could not attend a meeting in person. Approximately 900 people attended one of the public events, almost 1,900 unique visitors viewed information from the online hearing, and the project team received over 8,000 comments.
- ▶ The FEIS was released to the public on September 26, 2014. A 60-day review period was provided. As a result of the publication of the errata, ADOT and FHWA extended the review period to December 29, 2014. During the review period for the FEIS and errata, approximately 250 comments were received.
- ▶ ADOT and FHWA worked in close coordination with the Gila River Indian Community to hold a community forum on November 15, 2014, at the Boys & Girls Club, Gila River -



Komatke. The Gila River Indian Community developed the agenda and facilitated the forum, which consisted of introductions, a description of the comment opportunities and court reporters' roles, an introduction to the South Mountain Freeway video flyover simulation, and an "open-microphone" comment period. Other than invited guests, the meeting was open to only Gila River Indian Community members. FHWA and ADOT project team members were guests at the forum and were in attendance to listen to comments. A translator was provided for those wishing to speak in the native O'odham language.

## 2. Description of Project Changes

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The FEIS references enhancement opportunities during final design to incorporate elements of importance to the local community during the final design stage of the project. The following section describing this can be found on Page 3-60 of the FEIS:

### Enhancement Opportunities

Construction and operation of any of the action alternatives would create opportunities for ADOT and local jurisdictions to identify additional enhancements. Examples of enhancements are both procedural and project-specific. A procedural enhancement could include the engagement of select members of the public to participate in the design phase or through public art projects in the corridor. A project-specific example might be the result of excess right-of-way (ROW) that may be suitable for other public infrastructure projects such as park-and-ride lots or bicycle/multiuse paths. During the design phase, ADOT, local municipalities, the Gila River Indian Community, Valley Metro, and Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) would work together to identify and create enhancement opportunities. MAG policy would determine how enhancements would be funded.

Consistent with the FEIS section, the ROD includes the following commitment (see page 38 of the ROD):

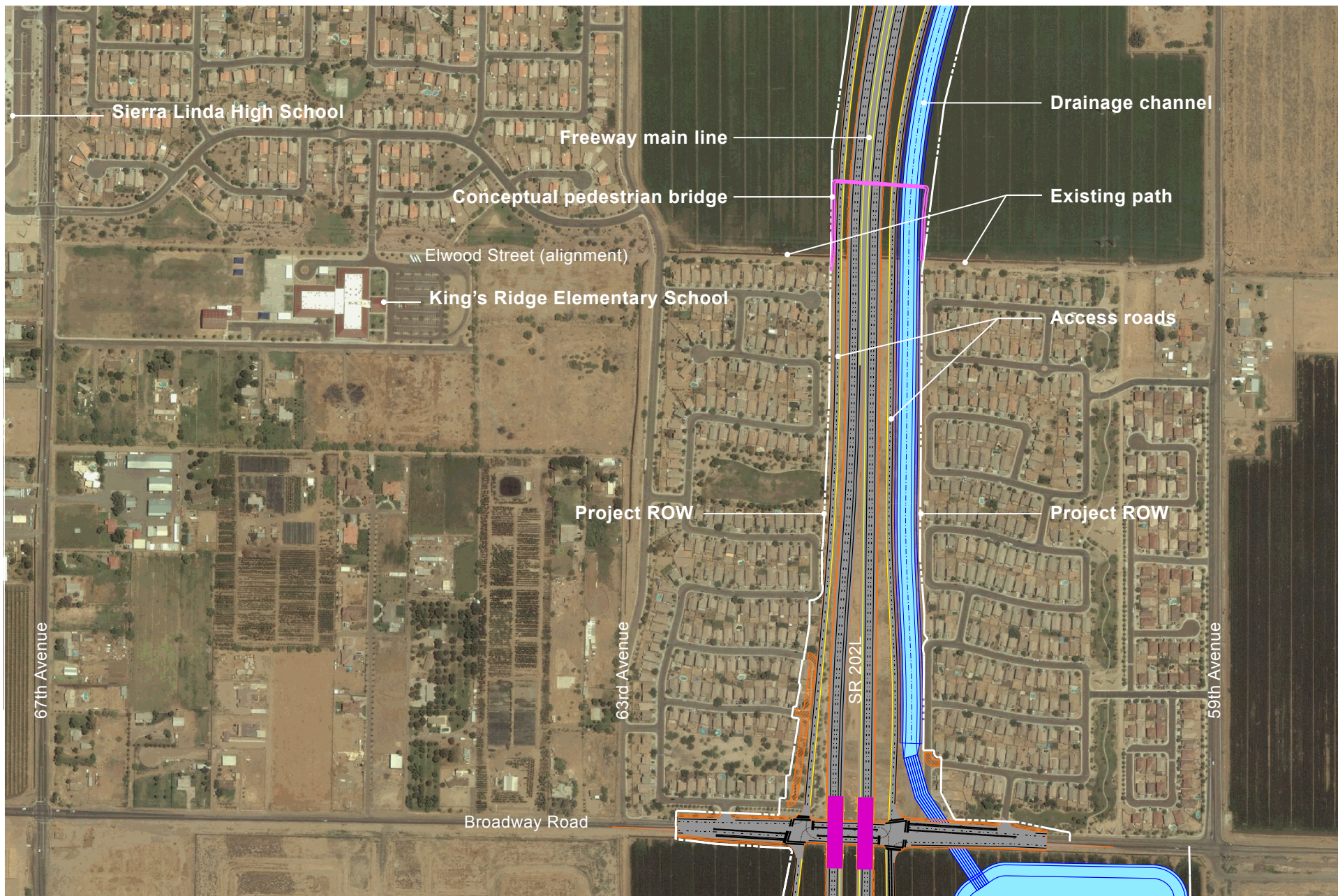
Commitment SOC-4: ADOT will coordinate with appropriate City of Phoenix officials during the final design process to consider and identify, if appropriate, enhancements such as a pedestrian overpass to reduce possible pedestrian-related impacts. Such enhancements would be independent of this project and would not change this NEPA document.

Based on City of Phoenix requests after the ROD, ADOT has proposed additional scope items for the project including a pedestrian bridge and a local connector road.

### **Elwood Street Pedestrian Bridge**

- The pedestrian bridge will cross the South Mountain Freeway along the Elwood Street alignment which is located ½-mile from Broadway Road and Lower Buckeye Road (see Figure 2).



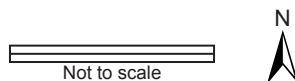


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Figure 2

Pedestrian Bridge  
 Area Map

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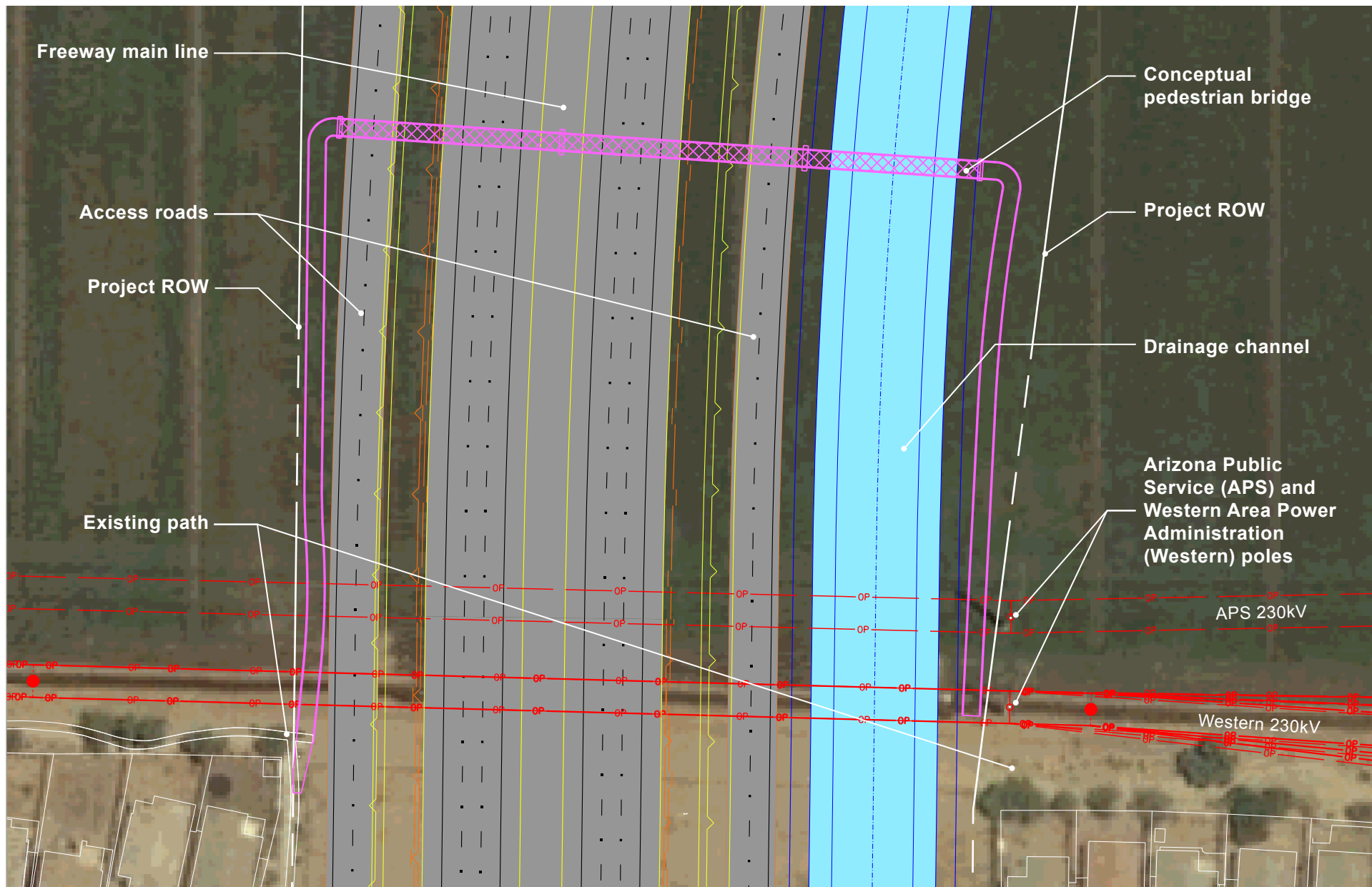




- ▶ There is an existing trail along the Elwood Street alignment on land owned by the Rio Del Rey Homeowners' Association. West of the freeway, the trail is paved, but east of the freeway the trail is unpaved. There is an existing ADOT-owned strip of land where the freeway will be constructed that bisects the two trail segments and the two Rio Del Rey neighborhoods.
- ▶ The pedestrian bridge will provide connectivity between the two Rio Del Rey neighborhoods and access to the elementary school and high school west of the freeway.
- ▶ The project team has prepared preliminary designs for the proposed pedestrian bridge (see Figures 3 and 4). The schematic plans presented in Figure 3 and 4 are conceptual to confirm that the bridge could be constructed within the FEIS ROW footprint analyzed during the NEPA process. The ultimate concept would be further developed during final design. Preliminary cost for the bridge is \$4 million.

### **Durango Street Connector**

- ▶ A new collector road connection is proposed between the northbound and southbound 59th Avenue frontage roads along the Durango Street alignment [ $\frac{1}{2}$ -mile from Lower Buckeye Road and Buckeye Road, just south of the Roosevelt Irrigation District (RID) canal] (see Figure 5).
- ▶ Durango Street does not currently exist east of 59th Avenue and it terminates at approximately 63rd Avenue from the west (approximately 500 feet west of the freeway ROW).
- ▶ The purpose of the road is to improve access and mobility between the northbound and southbound 59th Avenue frontage roads by adding a connection.
- ▶ The project team has prepared preliminary designs for the proposed Durango Street connector (see Figure 5). The road would be approximately 500 feet long and would be constructed to the City of Phoenix cross section "F", a local collector with two lanes and a roadway width of 40 feet.
- ▶ The new road will require extending the freeway main line overpass for the RID canal over the connector road and extending the storm water drainage culvert under the connector road. The ultimate concept would be developed during final design. The preliminary cost of the road extension and longer freeway structures is \$5 million.



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Figure 3

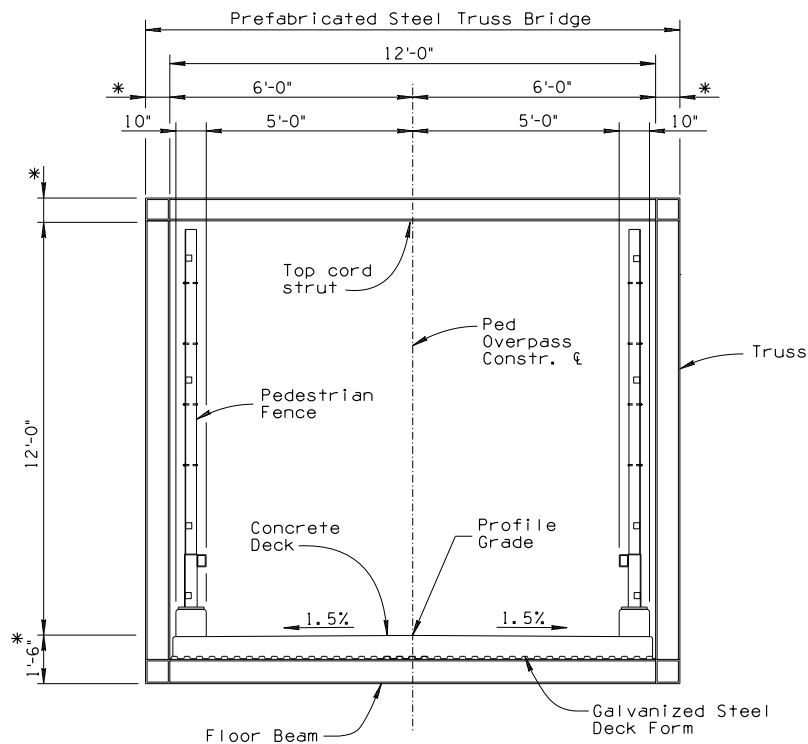
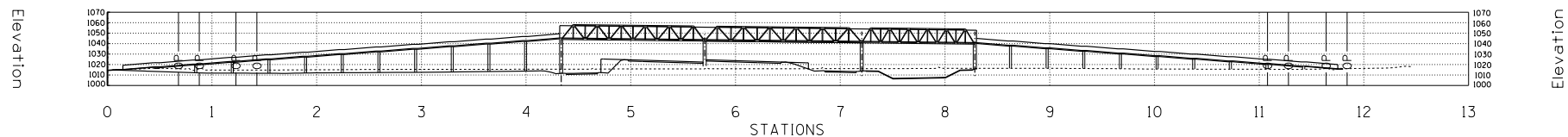
Pedestrian Bridge Layout

Aerial photography date: July 2013

Not to scale



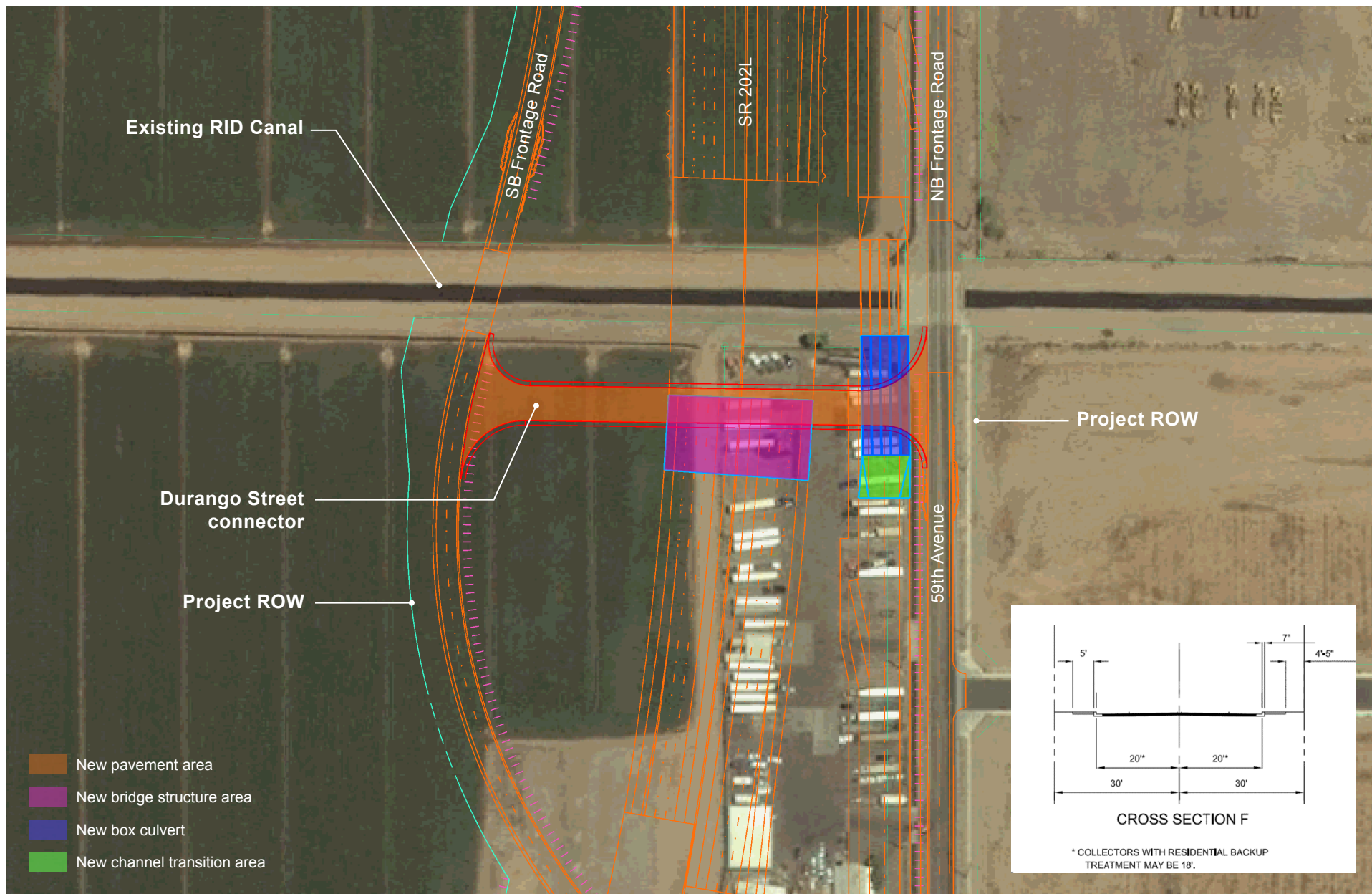
February 2, 2016



\* To be Determined by Truss Supplier

#### TYPICAL SECTION

Not to scale



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Aerial photography date: July 2013

Not to scale



Figure 5

Durango Street  
 Connector Layout

February 2, 2016

### 3. Environmental Consequences

The proposed pedestrian bridge and connector road would be located entirely within the FEIS ROW footprint. The pedestrian bridge would introduce a new bridge elevated above the freeway approximately 20 feet, which would be visible from residences in the Rio Del Rey neighborhood. The connector road would be located in close proximity to the planned frontage road and cross under the freeway main line. Table 1 provides a corridor-wide assessment of the environmental impacts from the pedestrian bridge and connector road. Resources with changes in environmental impacts are described in more detail following the table.

<b>Table 1. Environmental Consequences Assessment, Elwood Street Pedestrian Bridge</b>					
<b>Setting/Resource Circumstance</b>	<b>Change in Affected Environment</b>		<b>Change in Environmental Impact</b>		<b>Description</b>
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
Land Use		X		X	
Social Conditions		X	X		See discussion below
Environmental Justice and Title VI		X		X	
Displacements and Relocations		X		X	
Economics		X		X	
Air Quality		X		X	
Noise		X		X	
Water Resources		X		X	
Floodplains		X		X	
Waters of the United States		X		X	
Topography, Geology, Soils		X		X	
Biological Resources		X		X	
Cultural Resources		X		X	See discussion below
Prime and Unique Farmland		X		X	
Hazardous Materials		X		X	
Visual Resources		X	X		See discussion below
Energy		X		X	
Temporary Construction Impacts		X		X	
Material Sources and Waste Material		X		X	



<b>Table 1. Environmental Consequences Assessment, Elwood Street Pedestrian Bridge</b>					
<b>Setting/Resource Circumstance</b>	<b>Change in Affected Environment</b>		<b>Change in Environmental Impact</b>		<b>Description</b>
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
Secondary and Cumulative Impacts		X		X	
Section 4(f)/6(f)		X		X	See discussion below

## Social Conditions

Both the pedestrian bridge and the connector road would provide benefits to the local community. The pedestrian bridge would provide a safe crossing of the freeway for children and nearby residents and would support the City of Phoenix’s goal for establishing a system of trails that provide “linkages between parks, open spaces, village cores, neighborhood shopping centers, neighborhood schools, and neighboring municipalities” (City of Phoenix 2015).

The connector road provides a mid-mile connection between the one-way frontage roads along 59th Avenue. This improves mobility and access to businesses along the frontage roads and reduces the traffic at the freeway traffic interchanges. The connector road also provides development opportunities along Durango Street east and west of the freeway corridor by providing direct access to the freeway frontage road system.

No new mitigation measures are required for impacts on social conditions as a result of these project changes.

## Cultural Resources

The pedestrian bridge at the Elwood Street alignment is entirely within the boundaries of site AZ T:12:52(ASM), also known as Pueblo del Alamo. The site was determined eligible for listing on the NRHP under Criterion D as an archaeological site and under Criterion A as a traditional cultural property. The construction footprint for the proposed pedestrian bridge is entirely within the ROD approved freeway ROW. No new ROW or temporary construction easements (TCEs) would be required. This portion of the site would be adversely affected by the construction of the freeway. ADOT is implementing a Historic Properties Treatment Plan (HPTP) for the resolution of adverse effects to the historic property which would resolve adverse effects associated with the pedestrian bridge as well.

The Durango Street connector road would be built just south of the Roosevelt Canal, near the half-mile between Lower Buckeye Road and Buckeye Road. The construction footprint for the proposed connector road is entirely within the ROD approved freeway ROW. No new ROW or

TCEs would be required. No historic properties are located within the proposed footprint of the connector road.

In addition to the new scope added to the project, the development of project design elements as they pertain to the Roosevelt Canal and Union Pacific Railroad were also addressed. FHWA and ADOT held consultation meetings with the RID and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) on February 2 and 3, 2016, respectively, to discuss developing project designs and effects on the historic properties. Documentation related to this consultation is presented in Appendix A.

The Roosevelt Canal, designated AZ T:10:83(ASM), was determined eligible for inclusion in the NRHP under Criterion A for its associations with the development of historical irrigation districts in the lower Salt River and Buckeye Valleys. The canal intersects the freeway corridor at the half-mile between Buckeye Road and Lower Buckeye Road. The segment of the canal within the freeway ROW retains integrity and has been in continual use since its construction in 1928.

Prior Section 106 consultation determined that the canal would not be affected by the project because the freeway and frontage roads would avoid the historic property by clear spanning it, and that no further treatment was required (Petty [FHWA] to Jacobs [SHPO] July 23, 2015; SHPO concurrence July 29, 2015). In addition, a culvert, or possibly siphon structure, would be constructed underneath the canal between the northbound lanes and the northbound frontage road as part of the freeway's drainage system. The drainage structure would be constructed below the Roosevelt Canal and therefore would not alter its design or other qualities contributing to its NRHP eligibility. Because the canal would still be avoided, FHWA determined that a finding of "no adverse effect" remains appropriate for the historic property (Petty [FHWA] to Jacobs [SHPO] February 1, 2016, SHPO concurrence February 3, 2016; Petty [FHWA] to Neese (RID), February 1, 2016, RID concurrence February 2, 2016).

The Union Pacific Railroad intersects the freeway corridor at the half-mile between Van Buren Street and Buckeye Road. The railroad, designated AZ T:10:84(ASM), is the historic alignment of the Wellton-Phoenix-Eloy main line of the Southern Pacific Railroad. The segment within the freeway corridor was built in 1910 as part of the Phoenix and Buckeye Railroad which was then incorporated into the Wellton-Phoenix-Eloy main line in 1926 when Southern Pacific Railroad extended the line to connect to its transcontinental Sunset Route. The railroad was determined eligible for listing on the NRHP under Criterion A for its association with the development of Arizona's historic railroad network.

Prior consultation determined that the railroad would not be affected by the project because the freeway and frontage roads would avoid the historic property by clear spanning it, and that no further treatment was required (Petty [FHWA] to Jacobs [SHPO] July 23, 2015; SHPO

concurrence July 29, 2015). In addition, a culvert, or possibly siphon structure, would be constructed underneath the railroad on the eastern side of the northbound frontage road as part of the freeway's drainage system. The drainage structure would be constructed underneath the railroad and therefore would not alter its design or other qualities contributing to its NRHP eligibility. Because the railroad would still be avoided, FHWA determined that a finding of "no adverse effect" remains appropriate for the historic property (Petty [FHWA] to Jacobs [SHPO] February 1, 2016, SHPO concurrence February 3, 2016).

No new mitigation measures are required for impacts on cultural resources as a result of these project changes.

## **Visual Resources**

The pedestrian bridge would be elevated over the freeway; however, the bridge would be a consistent visual element in the overall change in the visual character created by the construction of the freeway, aesthetic treatment of the bridge would help diminish any visual impacts and could, over time, help unify the adjacent community.

No new mitigation measures are required for impacts on visual resources as a result of the addition of the pedestrian bridge.

## **Section 4(f)/6(f) Resources**

The Elwood Street trail was considered a potential Section 4(f) resource as a recreational area during the development of the DEIS along with all City of Phoenix trails not located within parks and preserves. This evaluation is documented in Appendix A of the *Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) Report* (ADOT 2012). The conclusion in the report was that these trails are not eligible for protection as Section 4(f) resources because:

- ▶ For City of Phoenix maintained trails, the primary use is to travel between destinations in the City of Phoenix and not recreation, so they are not Section 4(f) eligible
- ▶ For trails built on private land and maintained by developers or homeowners' associations (HOAs), they are not Section 4(f) eligible

The Elwood Street trail adjacent to the planned freeway is located on private land and is maintained by the Rio Del Rey HOA. FHWA considered the past evaluation along with updated information from the City of Phoenix General Plan (City of Phoenix 2015) and determined that the Elwood Street trail does not qualify as a protected resource under Section 4(f). The supporting materials related to the determination are provided in Appendix B.

No new mitigation measures are required for impacts on Section 4(f)/6(f) resources as a result of this project change.

## 4. Public/Agency Outreach

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During the comment period for the DEIS, the project team received comments from the City of Phoenix planner, residents of the Rio Del Rey neighborhood, and Riverside Elementary School District officials recommending that a pedestrian bridge at Elwood Street be included in the project to enhance connectivity for children between the neighborhoods and nearby schools. These comments can be found in FEIS Volume III, pages B113 to B119. The response from ADOT at that time was that “ADOT would coordinate with appropriate City of Phoenix officials during the final design process to consider and identify, if appropriate, enhancements such as a pedestrian overpass to reduce possible pedestrian-related impacts. During that process, if mitigation is warranted, the operations, maintenance, and liabilities of the facilities would be passed on to the local jurisdictions.” ADOT has worked closely with the City of Phoenix to develop the parameters for the design and aesthetics for the new pedestrian bridge, which will be completed during the final design process.

The City of Phoenix, through a Joint Project Agreement with ADOT, has committed to hire a public artist and coordinate with ADOT to design integrated public art enhancements for the pedestrian bridge. The City of Phoenix will participate with ADOT’s project-wide Aesthetics and Landscaping Task Force and coordinate with the Phoenix Arts and Culture Commission for review and approval of the aesthetic design of the pedestrian bridge. The City of Phoenix will also coordinate public input opportunities for the aesthetic design of the pedestrian bridge. As part of the continuing consultation associated with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, pedestrian bridge design information will be shared with the State Historic Preservation Officer, Gila River Indian Community, and other Tribes for input.

ADOT has worked closely with the City of Phoenix to determine the design parameters for the new connector road. During the design phase and prior to construction, ADOT will hold public information meetings to share and discuss design plans and proposed construction phasing and schedule and obtain community input. Changes to the scope, including the addition of the pedestrian bridge and connector road will be highlighted at these meetings. Additionally, this reevaluation document will be added to the ADOT project Web site <[www.azdot.gov/southmountainfreeway](http://www.azdot.gov/southmountainfreeway)>.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

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Since the ROD was signed, the project development process has continued with preliminary engineering, utility locating and coordination, geotechnical investigations, property acquisition, residential and business relocations, and demolition of properties needed for the project. ADOT has identified a Preferred Proposer and is in the process of negotiating a final contract. The contract, which includes the design, construction, and maintenance of the project, is anticipated to be signed at the end of February. Construction will not begin until after July 13, 2016.

Since approval of the ROD, there have not been any changes in laws or regulations that would affect the analysis of protected resources.

The Selected Alternative with the proposed additional scope items analyzed in the previous section still meets the purpose and need for the proposed action from the FEIS and ROD. No changes to the purpose and need for the project are proposed.

### Conclusion

A Supplemental FEIS is not warranted for the following reasons:

- ▶ The proposed modifications are limited in scope and impacts and are all within or adjacent to the ROW footprint analyzed in the FEIS/ROD.
- ▶ The Selected Alternative and its related impacts identified in the FEIS and ROD would not significantly change as a result of the modifications described herein.

### Recommendation

FHWA, in coordination with ADOT, reevaluated the South Mountain Freeway, Interstate 10 (I-10, Papago Freeway) to I-10 (Maricopa Freeway) FEIS and ROD per 23 CFR § 771.129. FHWA, with concurrence from ADOT, has determined that no substantial changes have occurred in the social, economic, or environmental impacts of the proposed action that would substantially impact the quality of the human, socioeconomic, or natural environment. Therefore, the original environmental document remains valid for the proposed action. It is recommended that the project identified herein be advanced to the next phase of project development.

## 6. References

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Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT). 2012. *Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) Report*.

City of Phoenix. 2015. *planPHX 2015 General Plan*.