



South Mountain Transportation Corridor Study

Citizens Advisory Team
Technical Report Summary

Draft Environmental Justice

What is Title VI and Environmental Justice?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines Environmental Justice as the "fair treatment for people of all races, cultures, and incomes, regarding the development of environmental laws, regulations, and policies." Environmental justice principles and procedures are followed to improve all levels of transportation decision making. Environmental justice is based upon Title VI the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin. The 1994 Presidential Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice, broadened the scope of environmental justice to include "minority populations and low-income populations."

There are three fundamental environmental justice principles:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

Why address these issues in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?

Effective transportation decision making depends upon understanding and properly addressing the unique needs of different socioeconomic groups. Properly implemented, environmental justice principles and procedures improve all levels of transportation decision making. This approach will:

- Make better transportation decisions that meet the needs of all people;
- Design transportation facilities that fit more harmoniously into communities;
- Provide opportunities for community input in the process, including identifying potential effects and mitigation measures in consultation with affected communities and improving accessibility to public meetings, official documents, and notices to affected communities;
- Improve data collection, monitoring, and analysis tools that assess the needs of, and analyze the potential impacts on minority and low-income populations.
- Avoid disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority and low-income populations.
- Minimize and/or mitigate unavoidable impacts by identifying concerns early in the planning phase and providing offsetting initiatives and enhancement measures to benefit affected communities and neighborhoods.

Who is considered to be a "minority" for the purposes of Title VI and Environmental Justice??

The four (4) minority groups addressed by the Executive Order on Environmental Justice are:

- Black (a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa).



South Mountain Transportation Corridor Study

Citizens Advisory Team
Technical Report Summary

Draft Environmental Justice

- Hispanic (a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race).
- Asian American (a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands).
- American Indian and Alaskan Native (a person having origins in any of the original people of North America and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition).

What is considered "low-income" for purposes of Environmental Justice?

- The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Order defines "low-income" as "a person whose household income is at or below the Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines." The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) poverty guidelines state that the poverty level for a family of four in 2005 is \$19,350.

What other groups of people are considered?

The South Mountain Transportation Corridor EIS also considered impacts to concentrations of the elderly, the disabled and female head of households.

Are these populations found in the Study Area?

The percent of people age 65 and over in the Study Area (five percent) is less than half that for Maricopa County (12 percent). While the overall percentage of people with disabilities in the Study Area (34 percent) is higher than Maricopa County (31 percent), no Census block groups in the Study Area had concentrations above the environmental justice threshold established for this study. The percentage of households headed by women with children under the age of 18 living with them in the Study Area (nine percent) is higher than that of Maricopa County (seven percent).

What kinds of freeway construction impacts would occur?

The project would generate short-term impacts such as noise, vibration, dust, and temporary street restrictions and closures during construction for which preliminary mitigation measures have been identified for consideration by ADOT and FHWA.

What if the project was not constructed?

- Urban growth is projected to continue in the Western Section and traffic volumes would increase on surface streets as a result.
- The conversion of existing agricultural and undeveloped land to residential, commercial and industrial uses would continue.
- As developable land becomes scarcer, land values will rise resulting in higher home and rental costs.
- Access from the study area to regional employment centers would become more difficult due to congestion.



South Mountain Transportation Corridor Study

Citizens Advisory Team
Technical Report Summary

Draft Environmental Justice

Are there any specific and/or unique impacts from the action alternatives?

Minority populations in the Study Area (67 percent) are nearly twice that of Maricopa County as a whole (34 percent). As a result, all of the action alternatives affect Census blocks with minority populations above the environmental justice threshold. Scoping efforts identified two specific communities of minority concentrations; these communities are identified as the Santa Maria township and Tolleson. In both instances, the action alternatives purposefully avoided directly impacting these communities.

Are there things that could be done to reduce or avoid impacts?

As the project was determined not to cause disproportionately high and adverse effects on any minority or low-income populations no environmental justice mitigation is warranted.

Measures will be presented in the Draft EIS and finalized during the final design process after the EIS process is completed.

Are the conclusions presented in this summary final?

It is quite likely that quantitative findings relative to impacts are subject to change. The reasons for future changes which will be presented to the public during the Draft EIS, Final EIS and Final Design stages are based on the following:

- Refinement in design features through the design process.
- Updated aerial photography as it relates to rapid growth in the Western Section of the Study Area.
- On-going communications with the City of Phoenix regarding measures to minimize harm to South Mountain Park/Preserve.
- On-going communications with GRIC in regards to granting permission to study action alternatives on GRIC lands.
- Potential updates to traffic forecasts as updated regularly by MAG.
- Potential updates with regards to the special 2005 survey to augment the 2000 Census.
- As design progresses, cost estimates for construction, right-of-way acquisition, relocation and mitigation will be updated on a regular basis.

However, even with these factors affecting findings, it is anticipated the affects would be equal among the alternatives and consequently impacts would be comparatively the same. This assumption would be confirmed if and when such changes were to occur.

As a member of the Citizens Advisory Team, how can you review the entire technical report?

The complete technical report is available for review by making an appointment with Mike Bruder or Ralph Ellis at 602-712-7545.