



South Mountain Transportation Corridor Study

Citizens Advisory Team
Draft Technical Report Summary

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 on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin. The 1994 Presidential Executive Order 12898 on environmental justice broadened the scope to include minority and low-income populations.

Environmental justice focuses on three fundamental principles:

- avoidance, minimization or mitigation of disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority and low-income populations
- ensuring full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process
- preventing 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 on 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. Adherence to environmental justice will assist the study team to:

- 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 provide offsetting initiatives and enhancement measures to benefit affected communities and neighborhoods



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Who is considered to be a minority for the purposes of Title VI and the Executive Order on environmental justice?

The Executive Order on environmental justice addresses four minority groups:

- Black (a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa)
- 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 Executive Order on environmental justice defines low-income as "a person whose household income is at or below the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) poverty guidelines." These guidelines state that the poverty level for a family of four in 1999 was \$17,029 and in 2008 is \$21,200.

What other groups of people are considered?

The study team also considered impacts to concentrations of the elderly, disabled and female heads of households, as defined by the Executive Order on environmental justice.

What percentage of these populations is found in the Study Area?

The share of people age 65 and over in the Study Area (5 percent) is less than half of that comparable share for Maricopa County (12 percent). While the overall percentage of people with disabilities in the Study Area (20 percent) is higher than the share for Maricopa County (18 percent), no census block groups (the smallest geographical unit for which the Census Bureau publishes sample data) 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 (9 percent) is higher than that of Maricopa County (7 percent).

What kinds of freeway construction impacts could occur?

The project could generate short-term impacts, such as noise, vibration, dust and temporary street restrictions and closures during construction.



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What if the project were not constructed?

- Urban growth is projected to continue in the Western Section, causing increased traffic volumes on surface streets as a result.
- Conversion of existing agricultural and undeveloped land to residential, commercial and industrial uses will continue.
- As developable land becomes scarce, land values will rise, resulting in higher costs for purchasing and renting homes.
- Access from the Study Area to regional employment centers will become more difficult because of traffic congestion.

Would the action alternatives cause any specific and/or unique impacts?

The share of all minority populations in the Study Area (67 percent) is nearly twice that of Maricopa County as a whole (34 percent). Scoping efforts identified two specific concentrations of minority populations: the Santa Maria community and Tolleson. Planning for the action alternatives purposefully avoided causing what would be direct impacts on these communities.

What could ADOT do to reduce or avoid impacts?

The project was determined to not cause disproportionately high and adverse effects on any minority or low-income populations so no environmental justice mitigation would be warranted.

Are the conclusions presented in this summary final?

Quantitative findings relative to impacts could change. Potential changes would be based on outcomes related to the following issues and will be presented to the public as part of publication of the Draft EIS, Final EIS and, if an action alternative were selected, in the final design process. The issues include:

- 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
- ongoing communications with the City of Phoenix regarding measures to minimize harm to Phoenix South Mountain Park/Preserve
- ongoing communications with the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) regarding granting permission to study action alternatives on GRIC land
- ongoing consideration of public comments
- potential updates to traffic forecasts as revised regularly by the Maricopa Association of Governments
- potential updates regarding updated census data
- regularly updated cost estimates for construction, right-of-way acquisition, relocation and mitigation



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Even with these factors possibly affecting findings, the study team anticipates effects would be equal among the alternatives and, consequently, impacts would be roughly comparable. 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 at 602-712-6836 or Mark Hollowell at 602-712-6819.