



South Mountain Transportation Corridor Study

Citizens Advisory Team
Technical Report Summary

Draft Social Conditions

Why study social conditions in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?

The Phoenix metropolitan area is growing rapidly and has been since the 1950s. The valley has gone from small agricultural town to major metropolitan area over the last 100 years. The rapid growth is expected to continue well into the future. With this growth, communities and their neighborhoods are created and evolve. Patterns of life then develop within these communities which contribute to a sense of place for its residents. Issues such as mobility, continuity, character, inclusion, and maintenance of a sense of place become important aspects to the individuals who reside in those communities.

The construction and operation of a major transportation investment like the proposed South Mountain Freeway could alter social conditions important to communities' residents. The study team analyzes potential impacts on communities when the construction and operation of a freeway like the proposed South Mountain Freeway could result in consequences both adverse and beneficial to those aspects important to communities, neighborhoods, and their residents.

Often, this type of study can be difficult to prepare. It involves individuals' opinions and preferences as to what is important to them. It involves an attempt to establish individuals' behaviors in a community. It involves the community itself and what makes it unique or gives it its character; and often, with this matter, communities, particularly those in the Phoenix metropolitan valley, are changing rapidly and the study team is challenged to look at the communities today and what those communities might look like 25 years from today.

What are the social conditions within the Study Area?

Overall, the social conditions within the study area can be described as dynamic. The southwestern area of the Phoenix metropolitan valley is one of the fastest growing areas in the state. Consequently, those characteristics important to residents (i.e., mobility, continuity, character, inclusion, and sense of place) are continuously changing. The character of the communities as they are today will most likely change dramatically over the course of the next 25 years. For example, 29 percent of the land use in the Western Section of the Study Area is currently agricultural. However, when looking at what is planned by local zoning ordinances, only nine percent is planned for future agricultural uses. In the Western Section of the Study Area, we are seeing a transition from an agricultural-based community to a more contemporary-residential community characterized by relatively large homes situated on small lots.

Through the Study Area, there are some communities that maintain distinct characteristics, these communities are described below.

- The City of Tolleson, approximately ten miles west of downtown Phoenix was incorporated in 1929. Founded in 1912, the city is unique in that it is about six square miles; much smaller than other incorporated cities in the valley. With a population of approximately 5,500 individuals, Tolleson has a distinct downtown area and maintains a family-oriented small town atmosphere.
- The Laveen Village area, located between the South Mountain and the Salt River, is founded in an agricultural heritage. The area has been valued by farmers, equestrians, and those looking for mountain access. First homesteaded in the late 19th century,



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Laveen has a strong farming community identity; over the years an industrial edge has developed to that provide local employment. Cotton and alfalfa fields bordered by canals and country roads give Laveen a rural sense of character. To the west of the Laveen area is the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC), characterized by open space that includes views of the Estrella Mountains.

Laveen's proximity to central Phoenix is bringing development pressures. The area contains largely undeveloped and agricultural property within a ten or twenty minute commute to I-10 and downtown Phoenix. Laveen Village is considered a developing area. The core of the Village, planned in the vicinity of 59 Avenue and Dobbins Road, will provide a blend of employment, commercial, and recreational uses and a concentration of community activities. Laveen today provides a sense of rural agricultural community and future planning will attempt to emphasize the importance of maintaining its character; however, it is anticipated that development pressures would influence its community character over the next 25 years.

- Santa Maria, is an 80-acre unincorporated townsite 'island.' Established in the early 1900s, the townsite sits on a slightly raised ridge unsuitable for farming at that time, but ideal for residences. The original homestead was issued in January 1916 under the authority of the U.S. Homestead Act of 1862. In the early 1940s, Mexican immigrants working on farms in the area established a fairly substantial makeshift tent community on the land. In August 1944, the property owner conducted land survey for subdivision into 62 parcels for the immigrants to purchase and in February 1945, the Santa Marie Townsite became official.

From 1945 to today, the townsite of Santa Maria has thrived as a rural Hispanic community. Many of the original founding families maintain a strong presence within the community. The original 62 parcels have now been further subdivided into 137 parcels. A Roman Catholic Mission Church was built in the townsite in 1973 as part of the Cashion Parish. Today, the community retains a strong sense of its rural character with its collage of predominately vernacular architecture, narrow streets built flush to grade (no sidewalks), and above ground utilities.

- The Ahwatukee Foothills Village is bounded by I-10 to the east, South Mountain to the north and the GRIC to the west and south (Pecos Road – the 1988 approved alignment for the South Mountain Freeway- separates the village from the GRIC). In a way, the area could be considered 'one large cul-de-sac.' Unlike the areas in the Western Section of the Study Area, much of Ahwatukee is developed; vacant, undeveloped land is relatively rare. It is distinct in its character in that it is composed of more contemporary master-planned communities with desert landscaping, golf courses and lakes. The adjacent South Mountain Park/Preserve provides opportunities for hiking, biking, and jogging. Because Ahwatukee is nearly fully developed, communities were master-planned, and because of its geographical and artificial boundaries, its character could be considered as more modern, unified, and 'upscale'.



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What kind of impacts would occur from construction?

There are several ways the construction of a project like South Mountain Freeway could alter the social conditions of a geographic area. Some examples are listed below:

- The current and anticipated character of neighborhoods could be altered by the visual and noise intrusions resulting from a freeway.
- Existing neighborhoods could be divided and internal street systems disrupted. Local transportation patterns could be altered.
- Portions of neighborhoods and/or communities with distinct character could be isolated.
- Access to public facilities could be altered.
- Cohesion of business properties could be affected to the extent that internal site circulation and parking/storage areas could be disrupted.
- Residences, businesses and public facilities could be displaced and possibly relocated to some other geographic area (addressed in a separate summary).
- Access to public facilities and businesses could be temporarily altered due to construction activities.
- Police, fire, and medical emergency travel routes and response times may be affected due to detours.

How do the alternatives differ in construction-related impacts?

All alternatives would affect the character and cohesion of adjacent communities and distinct sub-areas within the overall Study Area. Each alignment would affect different neighborhoods, but all would have similar types of impacts on the social aspects of the area.

One form of social impact would be the displacement of residences and businesses that would require relocation. Potential displacements by alternative are shown below:

Potential Displacements¹

Alternative/ Option	Business ²	Residential					Community Facilities ⁶	Utilities ⁷
		Single Family	Lots ³	MH ⁴	MF ⁵	Total		
Western Section Alternatives								
W55	68	111		3		114		
W71	11	229	543	3		775	1	
W101EPR	11	200	323	6		529		3
W101EFR	10	200	323	6		529		2
W101CPR	12	175	194	5		374	1	3
W101CFR	11	174	194	5		373	1	2
W101WPR	12	175	53	6		234	1	3
W101WFR	11	175	53	6		234	1	2
W101W99	16	169	52	6		227	1	
Eastern Section Alternative								
E1	0	283	29	4	1	317	1	



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Notes:

- ¹ Displacements were estimated through the use of aerial photography, flown in Summer 2004, supplemented by field observations during September 2003 and January 2004. Relative numbers subject to change as aerial photography, ground truthing, and design is continuously updated.
- ² Includes businesses whose buildings are directly impacted by the alternative, does not include businesses whose parking and outdoor storage areas would be impacted by an alternative.
- ³ Includes an estimate of the number of lots that have been platted but not built (streets have been built, construction has not begun).
- ⁴ Manufactured Homes.
- ⁵ Multi-Family.
- ⁶ Schools were included in the community facilities category not businesses.
- ⁷ Utilities include electric substations, communication facilities, well station.

Source: Aerial photography flown Summer 2004, September 2005, WSA field inventory, September 2003 and January 2005.

The W55 Alternative would result in the most business displacements, while the W71 Alternative would result in the most residential displacements. The W71 Alternative also would affect a number of platted lots in subdivisions currently under construction and therefore would potentially result in additional residential displacements.

What kinds of freeway operational impacts (post-construction) would occur?

For all action alternatives, increased road capacity from a new freeway would improve overall circulation and accessibility both within the Study Area and regionally within the greater Phoenix metropolitan area.

The existing character of residential and agricultural areas would be affected due to the presence of the freeway and associated visual and noise intrusions into nearby neighborhoods. In the Western Section, however, the largely transitional character from agricultural to residential has been planned for several years. The operation of the freeway, in fact, has long been planned through the Laveen area since the late 1980s. If anything, the operation of the South Mountain Freeway could accelerate the rate of the transition from agricultural to largely residential subdivisions. However, assuming construction of the South Mountain Freeway would begin in 2009 and be completed in 2015, it is more likely that much of the area in the Western Section already will have transitioned before the entire freeway is operational.

In Ahwatukee, the E1 Alternative would not substantially alter the character of the village. As noted, Ahwatukee is nearly fully developed. Since the freeway would be on the 'outskirts' of the village on largely the existing four lane Pecos Road, Ahwatukee's internal mobility, established sense of place, feeling of inclusion and internal continuity would not be altered. While the South Mountain Freeway would introduce additional noise impacts along the southern edges of the village, this type of impact would not be 'new' to the village considering I-10 (also planned for capacity improvements) borders the village to the east.

Another overall general impact would be related to cohesion of business and industrial properties where internal site circulation and parking/storage areas could be disrupted by the



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introduction of a freeway, particularly on a potential alignment that bisects large existing developed properties.

How do the alternatives differ in operational-related impacts?

All alternatives, when operating, generally would have similar kinds and levels of impacts on social conditions. Any differences among the action alternatives have been described above.

What if the project was not constructed?

No direct impacts on the community character and cohesiveness of existing or currently developing neighborhoods and commercial/industrial areas would occur as a result of the No Action Alternative. However, increasing congestion on the local street network would be expected, especially in the most rapidly urbanizing portions of the Study Area, if a controlled-access, high-speed travel option is not available to area residents, businesses and visitors. This could lead to increased travel times and reduced efficiency in the movement of people and goods within and across the area. It should also be noted that major portions of the study area are currently changing in character due to substantial population growth and land development activity.

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

For a project of the magnitude of the proposed South Mountain Freeway, no unique impacts are anticipated for any of the build alternatives. However, the ability to complete the planned and approved regional freeway system arguably is being outpaced by growth in the valley. This condition would likely continue to lead to substantial congestion on the local arterial road network as well as the regional freeway system. Also, not completing the regional freeway system by constructing the South Mountain Freeway would result in less than optimal operations of the regional freeway system as a whole.

What can be done to reduce construction impacts?

ADOT will look at a number of ways to avoid or reduce construction-related impacts. Examples of some of the measures ADOT could undertake are listed below:

- Maintain access to businesses, neighborhoods, and public facilities during construction.
- Consider timing of construction activities to minimize social impacts.
- Coordinate with local jurisdictions in minimizing impacts to emergency medical services, fire, and police response times due to construction detours.

What can be done to reduce social impacts once the freeway is operating?

ADOT will look at a number of ways to avoid or reduce construction-related impacts. Examples of some of the measures ADOT could undertake are listed below:

- Utilize noise barriers and landscaping to reduce noise and visual intrusions.
- Maintain access to public facilities, neighborhoods, and commercial areas through grade separations and planned interchanges.



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- Coordinate with local jurisdictions to address and correct impacts on internal roadway networks.
- Coordinate with all appropriate emergency services and utility companies to ensure that emergency and utility services are maintained to all service areas.

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.