

8.0 PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

Public information and involvement have been used throughout the Northern Parkway planning process to ensure that citizens were informed about the project and had opportunities for input.

Since the project was initially conceived as part of the Glendale Onboard (GO) Transportation Program, it has been featured at annual public open houses for that program for the past eight years, from 2002 to 2010, and updates on the design progress have also been included in the annual GO Program informational brochure mailed to every citizen of Glendale.

Four public meetings and a public hearing have been held specifically for the Northern Parkway project. All were conducted in open house format, allowing attendees to talk directly with project representatives. In addition, the project sponsors conducted a series of smaller focused meetings with individual neighborhoods along the alignment that would be directly affected by the project.

8.1 NOTIFICATION

Notification of Northern Parkway general public meetings was made through newspaper advertisements, direct mailing to property owners, and door hangers to adjacent residents. Newspaper ads were published in both English and Spanish. Publications used included *Glendale Star*, *Arizona Republic*, *LaVoz*, and *Peoria Times*. Each year, an updated property owners' mailing list was obtained through the Maricopa County Assessor's office. For the first two meetings, notices were mailed to all owners within 0.25 mile of Northern Avenue from Grand Avenue to SR 303L/Estrella Freeway (Loop 303). For the second two meetings, notification was mailed to everyone within 0.5 mile of the alignment. Additionally, door-hanger notices were distributed to all businesses, apartments, and homes within 0.25 mile of the alignment.

For the individual neighborhood meetings, various methods were used to ensure that everyone in each neighborhood was notified of the meeting. In some cases, property management companies provided mailing lists of their residents, which were used to mail notices. In other cases, notices were distributed door-to-door by either project staff or volunteer residents.

For the public hearing, a newsletter announcing the public hearing was sent to all property owners and residents within 0.5 mile of the project alternatives. In addition, the newsletter was mailed to the project's "interested parties" list, which included those who attended or provided comments at previous public meetings, and current elected officials and department representatives of the affected jurisdictions. Newspaper advertisements were published in both English and Spanish. Publications used included *Glendale Star*, *Surprise Today*, *Daily News Sun*, *Prensa Hispana*, *Glendale/Peoria Today*, *Arizona Republic*, and *Peoria Times*.

8.2 PUBLIC MEETINGS

The first Northern Parkway public meeting was held February 12, 2003, at the Desert Garden Elementary School. It was conducted in an open house format, allowing the public to come and go at leisure, and talk one-on-one with project and City staff. The purposes of this first public meeting were to notify the public of the project proposed to be completed in the area over the next 10 to 20 years and to provide them an opportunity to review and comment on conceptual engineering concepts. Comment cards and flip charts were used to gather public comments. A total of 58 people attended this public meeting including Glendale and Peoria citizens, Glendale council members, and media representatives.

The second public meeting was also an open house format held on July 10, 2003, at the Desert Garden Elementary School. The purposes of this meeting were to allow the public to review preliminary engineering plans for the Northern Parkway, demonstrate that comments from the previous meeting were incorporated into the latest plans, and allow meeting participants to speak with project and City staff. Comment cards and flip charts were used to gather suggestions and concerns. A total of 70 individuals attended the second public meeting including citizens, Glendale and Peoria City Council officials, and the media.

The third public open house served as the public scoping meeting for preparation of an EA in conformance with NEPA for the *Northern Parkway 30% Plans & DCR – Loop 303 to Grand Avenue Project*, under the direction of the Federal Highway Administration as lead federal agency and ADOT. The open house was held on June 1, 2005 at Desert Spirit Elementary School. A Spanish-speaking staff person was available for translation, as needed. Approximately 55 citizens attended the meeting. Information about project history and status was provided on a one-on-one basis by study team members, and attendees were asked to complete a comment form if they desired; 26 comment forms were received. All but one person identified themselves as residents and/or property owners in the area who learned about the meeting from the flyer mailed or delivered to their homes.

Public comments received at the scoping meeting prompted the project sponsors to examine additional localized design concepts and an alternate alignment. The fourth public meeting was held to update the public on the results of those studies and to discuss the current concepts under consideration. It was held at Desert Spirit Elementary School on December 8, 2005. A Spanish-speaking staff person was also available for translation, as needed. The room was organized by station, each focusing on a geographic segment of the corridor. Attendees were asked to complete comment forms, and 34 people did so. Approximately 63 members of the public attended the meeting.

8.3 NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

To supplement the general public meetings held for the Northern Parkway project, a series of meetings with individual neighborhoods were held between November 2005 and March 2006. Through these individual discussions the project sponsors wanted to obtain a broader level of public input and ideas, and to gain better insight into public preferences for the local design options being studied by talking with residents of the neighborhoods adjacent to Northern Avenue. All directly-adjacent neighborhoods were contacted to determine their interest in meeting with project team representatives. Meetings were held with 10 neighborhoods over a period of several months, as their schedules permitted. Some of these meetings were discussions with the homeowner associations at their regularly-scheduled meetings and others were special events set up to discuss this project.

Neighborhoods that hosted meetings were:

- Country Meadows Estates (Peoria) – January 21, 2006
- Country Meadows Condos Unit 2 (Maricopa County) – February 20, 2006
- Country Meadows Units 4 & 4A, combined (Peoria) – January 14, 2006
- Country Meadows Units 9 & 10, combined (Maricopa County) – February 11, 2006
- Meadowood (Peoria) – November 19, 2005
- Suncliff 4 (Peoria) – March 6, 2006
- Suncliff 5 (Peoria) – December 5, 2005
- Rovey Farm Estates North (Glendale) – March 23, 2006

A discussion was also held with the Coalition of Arizona Bicyclists at a meeting of that group on November 21, 2005.

Neighborhoods for which we were not able to arrange meetings are Summersett Village, Country Meadows Townhouses Unit 1, and Country Meadows Condos Unit 3.

At each meeting, project representatives provided detailed descriptions of the Northern Parkway design concepts under consideration, and discussed with residents how these might affect the neighborhood. The environmental assessment process, and project implementation process and schedule, were also presented. Where relevant, residents were asked if they preferred one design option over another.

8.4 PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing was held on October 14, 2009 at Raymond S. Kellis High School in Glendale. The purpose of the public hearing was to present the results of the Draft EA and solicit comments on the Draft EA as part of the NEPA 30-day public comment period which occurred between October 1 through October 30, 2009. Approximately 120 people attended the hearing including representatives from the project team.

For the first hour of the meeting, information about the project and environmental studies was presented on a number of display boards. Project representatives were in attendance to answer questions and discuss the information presented. The display area was organized by station, with each station focusing on different aspects of the project.

For the second hour of the meeting, information about the project was presented by the project team. Following the presentation, an opportunity for the public to give verbal comments was provided. Ten individuals provided comments during the verbal comment period. A court stenographer recorded all proceedings of the presentation and verbal comment period.

In addition, five written comments were submitted at the hearing and two verbal comments were given to the court stenographer prior to the presentation.

8.5 SUMMARY OF PUBLIC ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Several common concerns about the project have been expressed through all of the public open houses, neighborhood meetings, and public hearing. In general, these include the following:

- **Neighborhood Access Restrictions** – Most residents were unhappy about losing the unrestricted access they have today. People feel it will be inconvenient to have to use alternate access points at major intersections rather than the local street closest to them. Some suggested that making U-turns to return to their streets could be a safety hazard. Some neighborhoods suggested constructing additional access points at new locations to provide alternate ingress and egress, and several of these suggestions have been incorporated into the project design concept.
- **Alternative Alignment to Avoid Residential Areas between 115th Avenue and SR 101L/Agua Fria Freeway (Loop 101)** – Quite a few participants suggested studying an alternate alignment that would move a portion of the project south to Glendale Avenue. This alternative was developed to a conceptual level. Although not favored by the project sponsors for a number of reasons as listed in Appendix B, it will be studied further in the Environmental Assessment.

- **Traffic Speed** – Many people pointed out that traffic travels at high speeds on Northern Avenue today and are concerned that speeds will increase on the parkway. Pedestrian safety is a concern, as well as the ability to make safe turns into/out of local access streets; deceleration lanes were suggested to accommodate turns. People would like to know how speed will be controlled on the parkway.
- **School-Children’s Safety** – In the area between 103rd and 111th avenues, many children live on the south side of Northern and attend school on the north side. Their ability to cross Northern Parkway safely is a concern to many parents. People suggested that a safer situation is needed even in the absence of Northern Parkway improvements, and this issue should be looked at by the appropriate agencies in the interim and be addressed in the ultimate Northern Parkway configuration.
- **Traffic Noise and Air Quality** – People asked how the project may increase noise and air quality. They want to know if noise walls would be built; some are concerned about such walls blocking the views from yards.
- **Property Values and Disclosure Obligation** – Some people are concerned that the parkway would decrease the value of their property. A few said that they would probably move before the project is constructed in their area, and wonder if they would be obligated to disclose information about the project when they sell.
- **Bicycle Accommodation** – Some residents, as well as the Arizona Bicycle Coalition, would like to see the project provide bike lanes and connections to other bike routes. It was pointed out that there is no long-distance continuous east-west bike route in the area for commuters.
- **No Consensus on Design Options for 107th to 111th Avenues** – The options include either two traffic signals or an overpass “jughandle” to provide better access to and from the neighborhoods to compensate for loss of left turns at several locations. While many people think the signals would improve access, many feel they could increase accident potential and noise.

8.6 AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

The idea for the Northern Parkway was first proposed by the Glendale CACTI committee in February 2001. A meeting was held with the Peoria Public Works Director in June 2001 to discuss the potential super street concept. The Northern concept was on the ballot initiative approved by the voters of Glendale on November 6, 2001, and was later approved by Maricopa County voters in November 2004 as part of the adopted MAG RTP. Development of the design concept began in the summer of 2002. A committee was formed comprised of staff from Glendale, Peoria, Maricopa County, El Mirage, ADOT, and Luke AFB. The committee met

monthly and provided guidance for the development of the Northern Parkway concept. A design concept report was completed in October of 2003 and included GSI at arterial streets and limited signals at 0.5-mile locations.

After the county vote, the Northern Working Team (now consisting of a Management Committee and a Technical Committee) was formed to include representatives from Glendale, Peoria, El Mirage, MCDOT, MAG, Luke AFB, ADOT, FHWA, and FCDMC. This team has met monthly and provided review and guidance for further development of the concept. The concept as presented herein has the concurrence of representatives from these agencies. An agency scoping meeting was held in February of 2005. Agencies and stakeholders including utility companies and landowners presented their concerns and issues regarding the project.

The City of Glendale, Maricopa County, City of Peoria, and the City of El Mirage are partner agencies and Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), FHWA, MAG, Flood Control District of Maricopa County (FCDMC), and Luke Air Force Base are primary stakeholder agencies. The partner agencies all have a financial role in the project, have jurisdiction along the proposed route and have had the primary roles in developing the Northern Parkway design concept. Over the past several years an executive committee comprised of the agency partners and primary stakeholders met monthly and developed agreements on the concept for Northern Parkway, and funding and phasing of the project.

An Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the partner agencies was developed by the executive committee and approved by the City Council of El Mirage on June 26, 2008, the City Council of Peoria on August 26, 2008, the City Council of Glendale on September 23, 2008, and by the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors on December 18, 2008. In addition, Northern Parkway Executive Committee Bylaws were developed by the committee and approved on February 19, 2009. The IGA and bylaws identify Maricopa County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) as the lead agency for final design and construction of Northern Parkway while the City of Glendale has served as the lead agency for the development of the DCR and Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with FHWA requirements. The IGA and bylaws also stipulate that each agency will acquire right-of-way (ROW) within their own jurisdictions and maintain and operate the project within their jurisdictional boundaries.