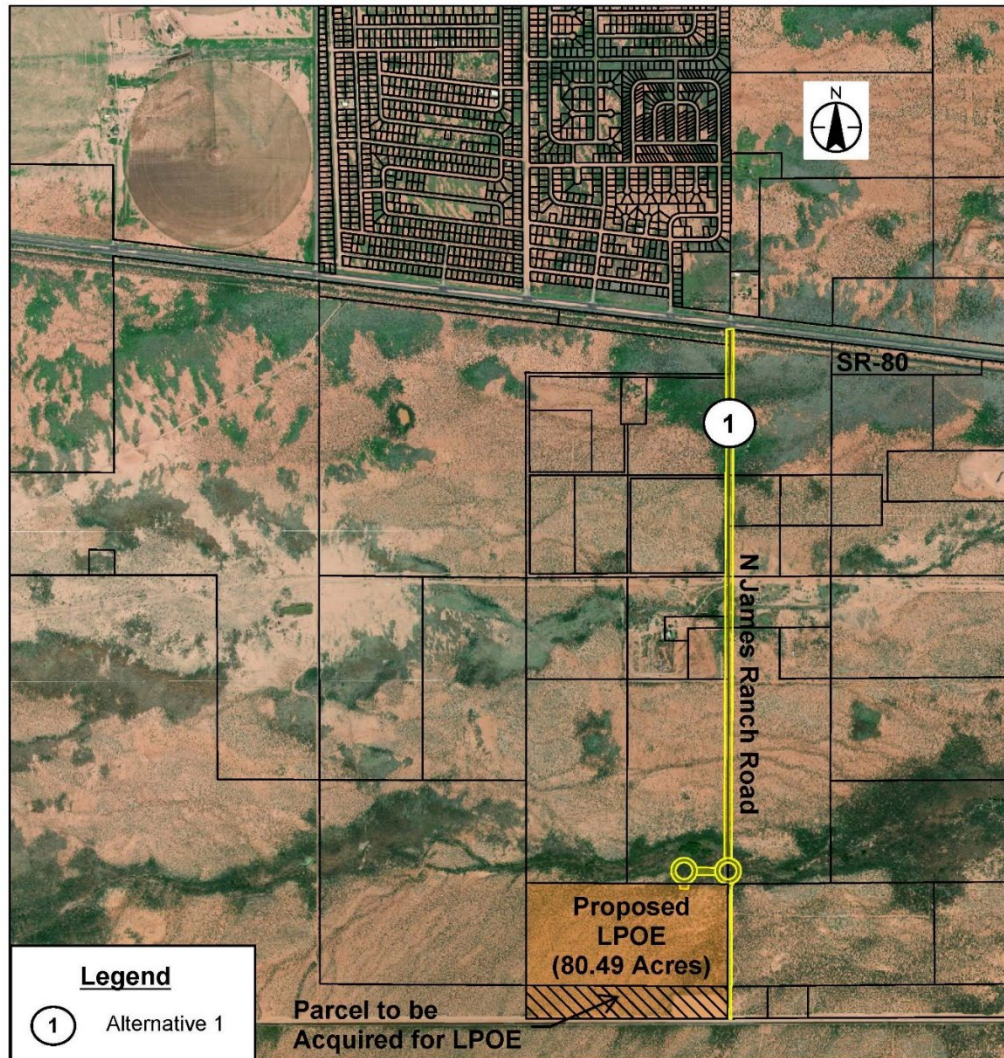


# FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

## For City of Douglas New Commercial Land Port of Entry (LPOE) Connector Road Study

Cochise County, Arizona  
Federal Project No. 999-A(561)T; ADOT Project No. F0534 01L



March 2025

*This page intentionally left blank.*

Arizona Department of Transportation

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

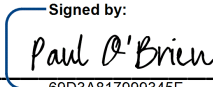
for

City of Douglas New Commercial Land Port of Entry Connector Road Study

Cochise County, Arizona

**Federal Project No. 999-A(561)T; ADOT Project No. F0534 01L**

The Arizona Department of Transportation has determined that this project will not have any significant impact on the human or natural environment. This finding of no significant impact is based on the attached environmental assessment, which has been evaluated and determined to adequately discuss the environmental issues and impacts of the project. The environmental assessment provides sufficient evidence and analysis for the Arizona Department of Transportation to determine that an environmental impact statement is not required. The Arizona Department of Transportation takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of the attached environmental assessment.

Approved by:  Signed by: Paul O'Brien Date: 4/1/2025  
69D3A817999345F...

Paul O'Brien, PE  
Administrator  
Environmental Planning  
Arizona Department of Transportation

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by ADOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated June 25, 2024, and executed by FHWA and ADOT.

Pursuant to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and other nondiscrimination laws and authorities, ADOT does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability. Persons who require a reasonable accommodation based on language or disability should contact Kara Spinney 855-712-8530 or email [projects@azdot.gov](mailto:projects@azdot.gov). Requests should be made as early as possible to ensure the State has an opportunity to address the accommodation.

De acuerdo al Título VI de la Ley de Derechos Civiles de 1964, la Ley para Estadounidenses con Discapacidades (ADA por sus siglas en inglés), y otras leyes y autoridades contra la discriminación, ADOT no discrimina por raza, color, origen nacional, edad, género, o discapacidad. Las personas que requieran una adaptación razonable basada en el idioma o la discapacidad deben comunicarse con Kara Spinney 855-712-8530 or email [projects@azdot.gov](mailto:projects@azdot.gov). Las solicitudes deben hacerse lo más pronto para asegurar que ADOT tenga oportunidad de hacer los arreglos necesarios.

Table of Contents

I. Introduction ..... 1

    A. Project Description ..... 2

    B. Summary of the Environmental Assessment..... 3

    C. Selected Alternative..... 4

II. Standards and Mitigation Measures ..... 5

III. Errata from Draft Environmental Assessment..... 8

    A. Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences ..... 8

        Environmental Justice..... 8

        Cultural Resources ..... 9

        Air Quality: ..... 9

        Water Resources ..... 10

IV. Public Comments ..... 10

Appendices

- Appendix A – Air Quality Conformity and Final Report
- Appendix B – Public Hearing Summary Report
- Appendix C - Responses to Public Comments

## **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

ADEQ	Arizona Department of Environmental Quality
ADOT	Arizona Department of Transportation
ASM	Arizona State Museum
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DCR	Design Concept Report
EA	Environmental Assessment
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FEIS	Final Environmental Impact Statement
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
GSA	General Services Administration
LPOE	Land Port of Entry
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NLCD	National Land Cover Data
NWS	National Weather Service
SIP	State Implementation Plan
SR	State Route
USC	United States Code

## **I. Introduction**

This final environmental assessment (EA) for the City of Douglas New Commercial Land Port of Entry (LPOE) Connector Road Study was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as amended (42 United States Code [USC] 4321 et seq.) and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations that implement NEPA (40 Code of Regulations [CFR] 1500–1508). The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) is the lead agency in the planning, preparation, and review of all technical and environmental documents associated with this final EA.

This Final EA provides ADOT's responses to public and agency comments made during the comment period and during the public hearing. It also provides additional information, data, or revisions to the Draft EA, where necessary, and is intended to be used in conjunction with the Draft EA. This Final EA includes a list of agencies and persons consulted and serves as a tool for ADOT to identify potentially significant impacts on social, economic, natural, and cultural resources and measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate such impacts. With the completion of this Final EA and the issuance of a Finding of No Significant Impacts by ADOT, the NEPA requirements for this project have been met.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental and State of Arizona laws for this project have been conducted by the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding (date June 25, 2024) executed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and ADOT.

As a recipient of federal funding from the FHWA, the ADOT is required to comply with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), which provides: "No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." ADOT complies with these requirements as part of overall agency requirements outlined in 49 CFR 21 Appendix C(a)(2) and Title 23 section 200.7. Though not an assigned responsibility under NEPA Assignment or mentioned directly in NEPA documents, environmental documents by ADOT are developed and associated actions such as right-of-way are acquired in accordance with the Title VI requirements.

Following detailed environmental and engineering studies of three alternatives for a connector road between State Route 80 (SR 80) and the General Service Administration's (GSA) new commercial Land Port of Entry (LPOE), this final EA has been prepared to document and present the results of the studies to the public and agency representatives.

## A. Project Description

A new commercial LPOE is planned to be constructed by the GSA in Douglas, Arizona by early 2028 on an 80.49-acre parcel that was donated to the GSA by the City of Douglas, Arizona, in September 2024. The proposed new LPOE will be located approximately 4.5 miles west of the existing Raul Hector Castro IPOE in Douglas, Arizona, on currently undeveloped land. The shaded area in Figure 1 has been analyzed relative to the direct, secondary and cumulative effects of the proposed project. As indicated in its Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), GSA preferred this site due to its availability of adequate space, proximity to major highways and transportation routes, and the support of the City of Douglas and Cochise County, as well as binational coordination with the Mexican government.



Figure 1. Project Vicinity Map

In response to the new LPOE development, ADOT, in partnership with GSA, Cochise County, City of Douglas and other federal, state, tribal, and local agency stakeholders, conducted an Engineering and Environmental Study to develop alternatives and evaluate possible locations of a two-lane divided roadway (known as the Connector Road) that will link the new LPOE to the state highway system at SR 80. This study included the preparation of a Design Concept Report (DCR), 15% design plans, an EA, and related studies and reports in order to define a set of recommendations and a recommended improvement alternative.

Construction of the Connector Road is needed because there is no all-weather, paved roadway that exists between GSA's new Douglas LPOE and SR 80. The primary goal of this project is to recommend a preferred connector road location and roadway typical section that can safely accommodate the commercial truck traffic that will be utilizing the proposed LPOE. Operational efficiency is a priority to the selection and design of a Connector Road alternative in order to facilitate the ingress and egress of commercial vehicles from the LPOE.

## **B. Summary of the Environmental Assessment**

The Draft EA was completed and approved by ADOT on October 23, 2024, with a public review and comment period from October 23, 2024 to December 9, 2024. A public hearing was conducted from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. on November 19, 2024, at the Douglas Visitors Center and included an open house format with a formal presentation to advise all individuals and agency representatives about the recommended alternative and its potential impacts. The Draft EA and appendices were available online on the project website (<https://study@SR80DouglasLPOE.info>), and hard copies of the document were available for public review during normal business hours through December 9, 2024, at the following locations:

- City Manager's Office, Douglas, AZ
- Douglas Public Library
- Cochise County Development Services Building, Bisbee, AZ
- Bisbee Public Library

Comment forms were available to record written and oral comments for the study record from members of the public. Project team members were available to address questions and concerns. Printed and visual materials were available in English and Spanish. posters with information on the Draft EA and public hearing were hand-delivered to businesses with potential right-of-way (ROW) impacts in the study area at the beginning of the comment period. The public review period and the public hearing were advertised through various media outlets to reach different sectors of the public. These included:

- **Direct Mailers:** A direct mailer was sent by mail to every address within a one-mile radius of the project area, as well as property owners, to provide information on the Draft EA and Design Concept Report (DCR), the public

hearing, and how to provide comments. The mailer was in both English and Spanish.

- **Newspaper Advertisements:** The team prepared and placed print and online advertisements that provided information on the study and Selected Alternative. The advertisements were published in the Herald/Review that covers Cochise County.
- **GovDelivery:** Information on the public hearing and comment period was distributed via a GovDelivery notices. These notices were distributed during the comment period to remind the public of the hearing, to take the survey, and to comment on the proposed alternatives before the December 9, 2024 deadline.
- **Project Website:** The study website and online public hearing tool provided information on the date, time, and location of the public hearing and how the public can provide comments. All materials for the public hearing were posted on the website in English and Spanish.
- **News Release:** ADOT Public Information staff distributed a news release about the public hearing to media outlets.

ADOT's responses to public and agency comments made during the comment period and during the public hearing are provided in the Final EA.

This Final EA also includes:

- List of environmental commitments and mitigation measures to be undertaken by ADOT and the designated construction contractor (**Chapter II**)
- Revisions to the Draft EA (errata in **Chapter III**)
- Supporting technical documentation for the air quality analysis (**Appendix A**)
- Public Hearing Summary Report (**Appendix B**), containing:
  - o public hearing summary
  - o meeting notifications
  - o hearing materials and presentation
  - o comment forms received
  - o public hearing transcripts
  - o other public hearing information

### C. Selected Alternative

Alternative 1 has been selected because it will provide the most direct route between SR 80 and the new LPOE near the Mexican border. This results in less right-of-way acquisition, less disturbance to the overall project area from temporary construction and drainage easements because it is the shortest route,

will have less construction costs, and will provide the most direct north south traffic movements along a linear roadway into the proposed LPOE.

Most of the construction of the Selected Alternative will be completed on land that is currently privately owned and undeveloped. Right-of-Way will be acquired from these properties by Cochise County, and a residential property may need to be acquired. In addition, drainage easements and temporary easements will be needed to construct the recommended improvements. Based on the property acquisition to occur for the project, a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) needs to be conducted for the properties to be acquired during final design.

Because the overall cost for the Selected Alternative is \$53 million, a phased construction approach is to be utilized. Phased improvements include constructing an interim, two-lane divided connector roadway and, depending upon funding, separating SR 80 improvements from the Connector Roadway Project. The ultimate improvements will consist of a four-lane divided connector roadway with 10-foot-wide outside shoulders and 4-foot-wide inside shoulders, a 20-foot-wide raised median with lighting, and two roundabouts for access to the LPOE.

Any work completed on SR 80 will be phased to allow for traffic to be shifted to maintain one lane of eastbound and westbound traffic throughout the construction process. Access to properties along SR 80 will be maintained at all times. The final construction phasing and traffic control plans will be developed during final design.

## **II. Standards and Mitigation Measures**

### **Standards**

ADOT and the contractor will follow the federal laws, regulations and guidelines and the ADOT standards and specifications listed below to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts for all relevant environmental resources:

- Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970
- Uniform Relocation Act Amendments of 1987
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- ADOT's Public Involvement Plan
- ADOT's NEPA EA and EIS Guidance
- ADOT's Right of Way Procedures Manual
- ADOT's Clean Water Act Manual

- ADOT's Temporary Traffic Control Design Guidelines
- ADOT's Erosion and Pollution Control Manual
- ADOT's 2017 Noise Abatement Requirements
- ADOT's Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction
- SAF-6.01 Asbestos Management Policy
- ADOT's Roadside Vegetation Management Guidelines

## **Mitigation Measures**

The following mitigation measures are not subject to change without prior written approval from ADOT Environmental Planning. These mitigation measures will be updated, as required, in the final design stages of the project. Global changes made to the mitigation measures from the Draft EA for the Selected Alternative include changing "would" to "will" for ADOT responsibilities. In addition, all references to "should" in connection with the contractor's responsibilities have been changed to "shall."

## **Southeast District Responsibilities**

- If clearing, grubbing, or tree/limb removal will take place during the breeding season (March 1 to August 31), the engineer will contact ADOT Environmental Planning to arrange for a qualified biologist to conduct active nest surveys of vegetation 10 (ten) days prior to removal. During the non-breeding season (September 1 to February 28), clearing, grubbing, or tree/limb removal may proceed without restriction (see Page 73).

## **ADOT Roadside Development Requirements**

- Protected native plants within the project limits will be impacted by this project; therefore, the ADOT Roadside Development Section will determine if Arizona Department of Agriculture notification is needed. If notification is needed, the ADOT Roadside Development Section will send the notification at least 60 (sixty) calendar days prior to the start of construction (see Page 73).
- The Arizona Department of Transportation Roadside Development Section will provide special provisions for the control of noxious and invasive plant species during construction that may require treatment and control within the project limits (see Page 73).

## **Contractor Responsibilities**

- The contractor shall not conduct any clearing, grubbing, or tree/limb removal from March 1 to August 31 unless a qualified biologist approved by ADOT

Environmental Planning has conducted a bird nest search of the affected vegetation and has determined that no active bird nests are present. Vegetation removal may occur if the area has been surveyed within 10 (ten) days prior to removal as long as only inactive bird nests, if any, are present (see Page 73).

- The contractor shall develop a Noxious and Invasive Plant Species Treatment and Control Plan in accordance with the requirements in the contract documents. Plants to be controlled shall include those listed in the State and Federal noxious weed and the State invasive species lists in accordance with State and Federal laws and executive orders. The plan and associated treatments shall include all areas within the project right-of-way and easements as shown on the project plans. The treatment and control plan shall be submitted to the Engineer for the Arizona Department of Transportation Construction Professional Landscape Architect for review and approval prior to implementation by the contractor (see Page 73).
- Prior to the start of ground-disturbing activities and throughout the duration of construction and any landscape establishment period, the contractor shall arrange for and perform the control of noxious and invasive species in the project area (see Page 74).
- To prevent the introduction of invasive species seeds, all earthmoving and hauling equipment shall be washed prior to entering the construction site, and the contractor shall inspect all construction equipment and remove all attached debris, including plant parts, soil, and mud, prior to the equipment entering the construction site (see Page 74).
- To prevent invasive species seeds from leaving the site, the contractor shall inspect all construction and hauling equipment and remove all debris, including plant parts, soil, and mud, prior to leaving the construction site (see Page 74).
- An ASTM compliant Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) shall be completed for all property to be acquired for this project (see Page 74).
- Prior to construction, the contractor shall sample stockpiled debris and characterize it for waste profiling purposes and disposed offsite in an appropriate landfill. Soils below the stockpiled trash debris, debris stockpiles, empty above-ground storage tank, empty drums, and former railroad track slag shall be observed and possibly sampled to confirm no subsurface soil impacts (see Page 75).

### III. Errata from Draft Environmental Assessment

This part of the Final EA contains additions or alterations to the Draft EA to clarify, further discuss, or make corrections to the text. These changes are the result of public and agency comments and are provided below with reference to the page numbers of the original text in the Draft EA. Deleted text is identified with strikethrough ( ) and new or substituted text appears in red italics (*italics*). This document should be used in conjunction with the Draft EA, and the changes add to or supersede what was included in the published Draft EA.

The following global changes to the Draft EA text are not shown in these errata:

- “Proposed project” and “proposed action” have been changed to “project.”
- “Preferred Alternative” has been changed to “Selected Alternative.”
- References to “would” regarding the project and/or Selected Alternative are changed to “will.”
- No revisions, clarifications, or corrections were required for the following chapters and sections of the Draft EA, other than the global changes noted above:
  - Chapter 2. Purpose and Need
  - Chapter 3. Alternatives
  - Chapter 4. Affective Environment, Environmental Consequences
    - Issues Eliminated from Further Stud
    - Land Use
    - Socioeconomic Considerations
    - Visual Resources
    - Noise
    - Biological Resources
    - Hazardous Materials
    - Secondary/Cumulative Impacts
  - Chapter 6. Bibliography
- **Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences**

**Environmental Justice:** (DEA pages 34-40)

*Following the distribution of the Draft EA, the Executive Order 12898 (Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice (EJ) in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations) was rescinded by Presidential Action on January 21, 2025*

*through Executive Order (Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity). As a result, the EJ evaluations included in the Draft EA have been rescinded and are no longer considered in this EA.*

**Cultural Resources:** (DEA pages 46-49)

*During fieldwork, four new archaeological sites and seven isolated occurrences were discovered and recorded with three of the new sites (AZ FF:10:89[ASM], AZ FF:10:90[ASM], and AZ FF:10:91[ASM]) encountered during the initial April 2023 survey, and one additional site (AZ FF:10:92[ASM]) encountered during an additional survey in December 2023.*

**Environmental Consequences–Selected Alternative**

Sites (AZ FF:10:89[ASM], AZ FF:10:90[ASM], AZ FF:10:91[ASM], and AZ FF:10:92[ASM]) were recommended as Not Eligible for inclusion in the NRHP. These sites are newly recorded, recent historic sites and consist primarily of aboveground features. Any subsurface cultural deposits are limited to post holes for fencing or utility or light fixtures. These sites require no further archaeological work.

*Section 106 consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was documented in an October 9, 2024 letter, which indicated the project would have no adverse effect on cultural resources in the Area of Potential Effect.*

**Air Quality:** (DEA pages 50-57)

An Interagency Consultation (IAC) Group was established to guide the development of the regional air quality conformance analysis process as well as the local project conformity. Agency representation in this group included:

- ADOT
- FHWA
- EPA
- ADEQ
- Southeastern Arizona Governments Organization
- City of Douglas
- Cochise County

Interagency consultation on the modeling planning assumptions required under 40 CFR 93.105(c)(1)(i) concluded on **October 10, 2024**. *FHWA determined regional and local project conformity on January 15, 2025.*

**Water Resources:** (DEA pages 65-69)

Aerial photography and field observations were used to determine the potential presence of jurisdictional Waters within the footprint of the *Selected Alternative and associated drainage easements*. Overland flow originates from within Mexico and is oriented in a direction of southwest to northeast until encountering the International Border. Once across the International Border, the direction of overland flow is from west to east. There are no designated impaired waters in the study area and no wetlands were identified. An Approved Jurisdictional Delineation (AJD) for the *Selected Alternative* was submitted for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (*Corps*) review in *February 2025*. The Corps *issued its determination on March 6, 2025* that Section 404 Waters of the U.S. are not present in the project area. *Therefore, a Section 404 permit and Section 401 water quality certification are not required for this project.*

#### **IV. Public Comments**

Following the distribution of the Draft EA, a public hearing was conducted at the Douglas Visitors Center on November 19, 2024, to present the findings of the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EA. Approximately 35 people attended the hearing, and six attendees provided comments. ADOT received comments via email, on-line comment forms, verbally, and letter. A public hearing summary report is included in Appendix B. The comments and associated responses are included in a comment resolution form Appendix C.