

North–South Corridor Study

Draft Agency and Public Scoping Summary

Pinal County, Arizona

Federal-aid Project No. STP-999-A(BBM)

ADOT Project No. 999 PN 000 H7454 01L

February 2011 | Version 2



Arizona Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

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Prepared for

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Roadway Predesign Section
Environmental Planning Group
Communication and Community Partnerships

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1 Introduction

The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), as the lead federal agency, have initiated an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Location/Design Concept Report (L/DCR) to identify a transportation corridor to connect US 60 and Interstate 10 (I-10). The proposed North–South Corridor study area begins at US 60, in the vicinity of Apache Junction and extends south for approximately 45 miles to connect to I-10, in the vicinity of Eloy and Picacho, in Pinal County, Arizona (Figure 1).

The first formal step in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process is the scoping phase, the results of which are summarized in this report. The notice of intent (NOI) was published in the *Federal Register* on September 20, 2010 and represented the official start of the EIS and scoping process (Appendix A). The scoping process was open to agencies and the public to identify the range, or scope, of issues to be addressed during the development of engineering, planning and environmental studies.

The agency scoping meeting for this study occurred on October 5, 2010, and the public scoping meetings occurred October 19, 21, 26, and 28, 2010, in locations throughout the study area. The official scoping comment period ended on November 11, 2010; however, comments received after the comment period will be documented and reviewed by the study team.

The following scoping summary includes the information and presentations provided during the scoping meetings, as well as a summary of comments received from participants and responses from the study team.

2 Agency Scoping

2.1 Agency Scoping Invitation Letter

The study team prepared and distributed a scoping letter inviting agency representatives to participate in the scoping phase of the study. The invitation letters were mailed on September 20, 2010. A copy of the agency scoping invitation letter is included in Appendix B. A total of 206 individuals representing forty-three agencies were invited to participate in the study.

2.2 Agency Scoping Meeting

ADOT hosted an agency scoping meeting on October 5, 2010 at the Florence Town Hall, located at 775 North Main Street, Florence, Arizona 85132. The purpose of this meeting was to provide agency representatives with preliminary study information, present the Corridor Opportunity Area, and receive input regarding any issues recommended for evaluation.

Fifty-six individuals representing the following agencies were in attendance (Appendix C):

- City of Apache Junction
- Arizona Department of Corrections
- Arizona Department of Public Service
- Arizona Department of Transportation
 - Communication and Community Partnerships
 - Environmental Planning Group

- Multimodal Planning Division
- Predesign
- Roadway Design
- Traffic Engineering
- Arizona State Land Department
- City of Casa Grande
- Central Arizona Association of Governments
- Central Arizona Project
- City of Coolidge
- Copper Basin Railway
- City of Eloy
- Town of Florence
- Maricopa Association of Governments
- Maricopa County
- Maricopa County Department of Transportation
- City of Mesa
- Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport
- Pima Association of Governments
- Pinal County
- Town of Queen Creek
- Resolution Copper Company
- Salt River Project
- San Carlos Irrigation District
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Federal Highway Administration
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Valley Metro

2.3 Discussion Session

Following the presentation, each agency representative was given the opportunity to comment on the study and the information presented. The comments and responses are documented in Table 1. In addition, contact information was provided for agency representatives to continue providing input. A copy of the presentation is included in Appendix D. Aerial mapping of the study area and informational boards (Appendix D) were also available for agency representatives to view.

Figure 1. North–South Corridor location

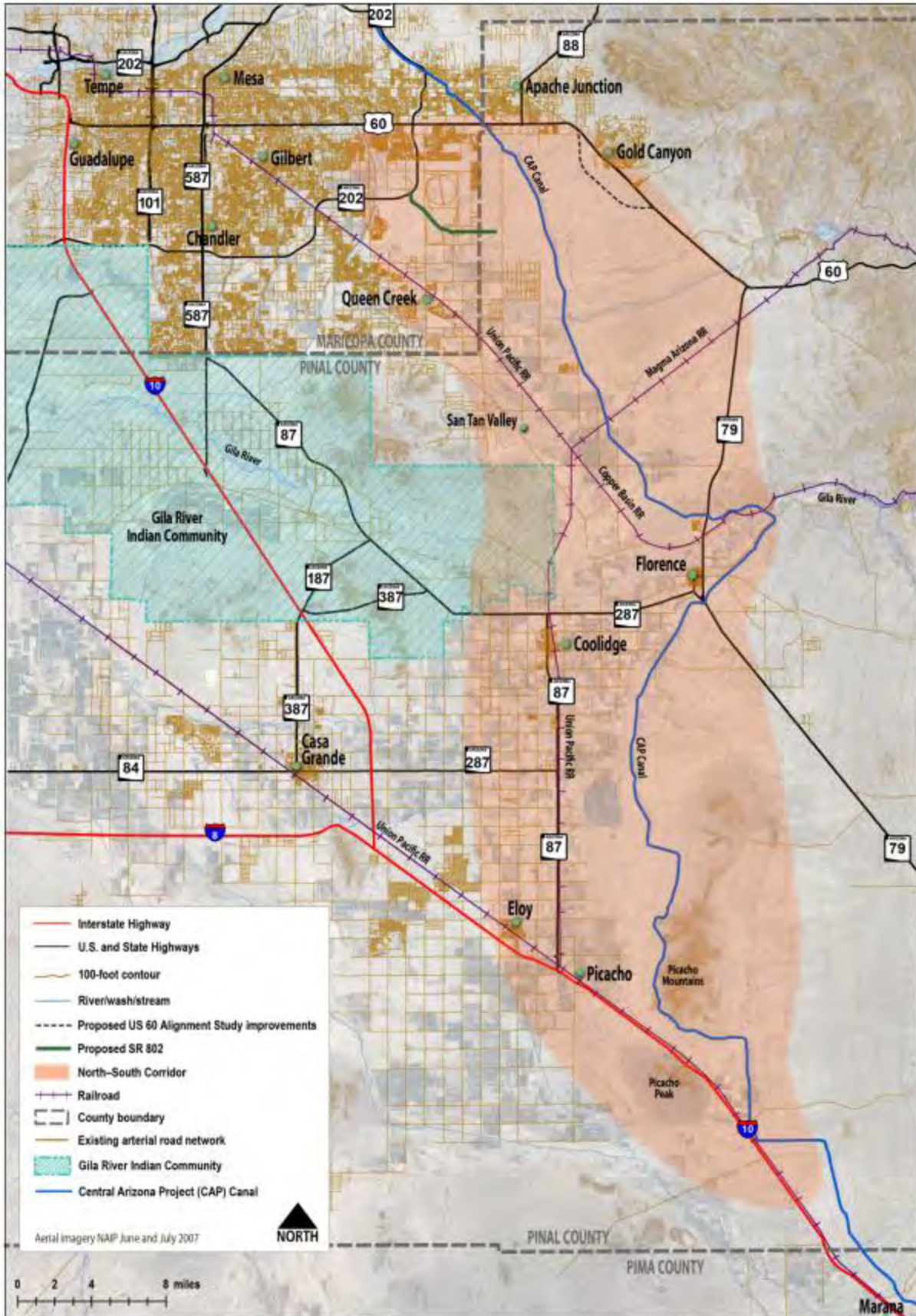


Table 1. Agency scoping meeting comments

Agency	Comment	Response
ADOT Communication and Community Partnerships	We are conducting city council briefings prior to public meetings. If you have any questions about the study please let Javier Gurrola or Pamela Cerece know. CCP is also working with the team for public involvement and business outreach.	N/A
ADOT Multimodal Planning Department	The study team should coordinate and evaluate this study as a multimodal corridor and also consider growth areas.	The study team is evaluating transportation facility options including multimodal alternatives. Growth areas including planned developments up to 2020 were considered during the development of the Corridor Opportunity Area and are categorized as "areas to avoid."
ADOT Roadway Design	We will stay involved with the study.	Comment noted by study team.
Arizona State Land Department	Will the maps shown today be available online? There may be some unknown drainage areas near the DMB property.	Study materials including the maps shown in the presentation will be available on-line at www.azdot.gov/Highways/Projects/NorthSouthCorridorStudy/Meetings_Notices.asp . The study team will also be able to provide additional information as requested. Regarding the evaluation of drainage areas, an initial inventory of existing drainage areas was used in the development of the Corridor Opportunity Area and more information regarding the drainage areas will be gathered as the study continues.
Arizona Department of Public Safety	Will you be keeping State Route 79 or removing it? We would like to continue to be involved and informed of the study. We recommend you stay west of Picacho Mountain because this alignment will be easier to patrol as most people live on this side of the mountain. Emergency response is on this side of the mountain and east and west of Eloy on I-10. It is difficult to get responders to leave the city and our workforce can only grow if the town is growing.	The study will evaluate both improvements to existing roads such as SR 79 as well as a new roadway.
Town of Apache Junction	The study should include access management for local communities to help protect right-of-way. The study team should also model commercial versus residential traffic. Need to model for ultimate build-out, and address what existing roads look like in the future. Are we going to include community colleges as development/growth areas? The town is very interested in protecting the existing highways system. There are also concerns with the impact of new development on Apache Junction and the need for new infrastructure to support it.	The traffic model is currently being developed and will account for future growth to 2040. The model will account for commercial and residential traffic. Coordination with community colleges and other stakeholders will continue throughout the study. Also, new and planned development is being taken into consideration. The study team will also evaluate whether expanding existing facilities will accommodate future traffic volumes and meet the purpose and need of the study.
City of Casa Grande	Concern regarding potential impacts to the economy if North-South alignment bypasses the city. To reduce right-of-way acquisition, the study team should consider using existing facilities. The study team should also consider moving the Corridor Opportunity Area to the west border.	Impacts to economic development will be evaluated during this study as well as costs for right-of-way acquisition. The study team will also evaluate whether expanding existing facilities will accommodate future traffic volumes and meet the purpose and need of the study.

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Table 1. Agency scoping meeting comments (continued)

Agency	Comment	Response
Central Arizona Association of Governments	Other planned land uses may change within the Corridor Opportunity Area, in addition to existing land uses. The study team should look at impacts to Apache Junction and the potential impacts of incorporating San Tan Valley.	The study team is taking general plans into consideration and has considered planned development prior to 2020 as areas to avoid. The data being used is consistent with CAAG data, and will be updated throughout the study.
Central Arizona Project (CAP)	Concerned with the number of proposed crossings of the CAP canal. There is also a national recreational trail that needs to be considered. Would like to schedule a future meeting to discuss upcoming plans.	The study team will coordinate with CAP as the study proceeds.
Town of Coolidge	Will there be a Public-Private Partnership (P3) or toll road possibility? Also, the corridor will need to serve Superstition Vistas. SR 79 is always going to be there, but is there potential for going over SR 79? What is the centerline approval status? The town would like to keep SR 79 as a separate facility. Questions regarding schedule and future name of the actual road. Why is the Corridor Opportunity Area south of Coolidge and north of Picacho labeled “not available”? Salt River Project (SRP) has updated mapping that shows the Trans-Canada line and other earlier corridor studies. Support the western leg as it serves existing population, this is State Trust land.	P3 is a potential funding option. The study team will also evaluate whether expanding existing facilities will accommodate future traffic volumes and meet the purpose and need of the study. The study is a nominal three-year process for the Draft EIS. Additionally, the study team will continue to coordinate with utilities and other stakeholders to ensure that the information included in the study is up-to-date.
Copper Basin Railway	The railroad has been in existence in the area for a long time. There has been past interest in developing the railroad and utilizing this facility to draw industry to the Florence area. The North-South Corridor could reignite interest in developing and growing industry presence in this area. This could have an impact on the operation of the railroad. Is there a possibility of inter-city rail or Amtrak across the Union Pacific line? We are interested in more information regarding the rail study.	Information specific to the rail study will be shared with the Phoenix -Tucson InterCity Rail study team.
Town of Eloy	The study team should also analyze McClellan Wash and economies of scale with HDR’s flood control study. Eloy just finished the Small Area Transportation Study and the general plan is getting close to being finished.	As the study team proceeds, McClellan Wash and other flood control studies will be reviewed. Also, the study team will review transportation plans, general plans, and other relevant documents in order to establish the affected environment.
Town of Florence	Need to maintain surface transportation routes as there may be pressure/demand on existing routes such as Hunt Highway, SR 79 and SR 87. Also, new developments will increase potential traffic. Military expansion is planned east of SR 79. In general, there is limited economic development potential in this area. If more development occurs west of Anthem, that will affect the sustainability of the downtown area. Currently, there is limited access to downtown Florence. Question regarding the “undefined drainage area.” SR 802 to the east is on hold, is that project dependent upon this study?	The undefined drainage area indicates an area to avoid if possible and was a method to categorize the data. More information about these areas will be gathered as the study progresses. The study team is looking at existing and planned development, including military expansion, and will be coordinating with affected stakeholders throughout the study. The SR 802 east study will resume once this study has progressed to the corridor level.
Maricopa County Department of Transportation	This corridor should provide connectivity within the Sun Corridor.	This study will address providing connectivity within the Sun Corridor.

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Table 1. Agency scoping meeting comments (continued)

Agency	Comment	Response
Maricopa Association of Governments	There will be a Freight Framework study looking at freight corridors within the Sun Corridor, which will be run by Tim Strow.	The study team will coordinate with MAG and review information from the Freight Framework study, when available.
City of Mesa	Mesa has 11,000 acres in Pinal County and nine miles adjacent to the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR). The study team should look at the rail corridor and consider an intermodal facility. What would the right-of-way width be? This corridor should provide connectivity to the southeastern portion of Phoenix. What is the timeframe for this study? There is also a significant gas facility in the area. The Drainage Master Plan is currently being updated.	Additional coordination with the City of Mesa will occur as the study continues and consideration of multimodal options will also occur. A freeway right-of-way is typically 300-feet wide.
Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport	Future passenger/vehicular traffic will increase as the job base in the Gateway area grows. Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport would like to work with ADOT throughout this study. We anticipate 5 to 6 million passengers using the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport in the future.	The study team will continue to coordinate with the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport.
Pinal County	We have concerns with the traffic model. The corridor needs to include shared routes (e.g., power lines, utilities, etc.). We should coordinate now/early on in the study. Interstate 11 (I-11) in the Hidden Valley Study did not come this far east. The Central Framework Study extended I-11 east of I-10. The study team should consider I-11 in the traffic model. The maps should show City of Mesa property. Freeways are only beneficial if you get traffic to it; improvements to the arterial street network are also needed. US 60 is an example of this problem. The study team should consider two alternatives: preferred and secondarily preferred and elements from both could be used.	The traffic model is currently being developed, and there will be an opportunity for stakeholders to review the model when it is available (early 2011). The study team will continue to coordinate with Pinal County throughout the development of the corridor and alternatives.
Resolution Copper	The existing and planned development areas should be blocked or limited opportunity areas. Also, the railroad is not marked as an avoidance area. Avoidance areas might be opportunities for others.	Existing and planned development to 2020 is shown within the Corridor Opportunity Area as areas to avoid. The Corridor Opportunity Area will be further evaluated and refined during the Alternative Selection process and the avoidance areas will be looked at more closely.
SRP	We can provide more up-to-date information on our built and planned transmission lines and substations in the area.	The study team will coordinate with SRP to get up-to-date information on transmission lines, substations, and future projects.
San Carlos Irrigation District	We are interested in impacts to canal operations and land.	The study team will continue to coordinate with San Carlos Irrigation District.
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	We will submit our comments.	[Written comment received by study team. See Table 2 and Appendix E.]
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	The purpose and need for the corridor needs to be clearly justified. During the alternatives analysis, the study team should look at possible improvements to the existing infrastructure and also alternatives that are adjacent to existing infrastructure such as Ironwood Road and Hunt Highway. Additional comments will be submitted to the study team in writing.	[Written comment received by study team. See Table 2 and Appendix E.]

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Table 1. Agency scoping meeting comments (continued)

Agency	Comment	Response
U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service	The study team should consider existing agricultural plans in the area.	The study team is taking into consideration all planned land uses.
Valley Metro/Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA)	The study team should consider alternatives that would do the least environmental damage and should also be coordinating with the State rail plan to consider multimodal options.	The study team will be evaluating the environmental impacts of all of the alternatives being developed. The study team will also be coordinating with the Phoenix-Tucson Intercity Rail study team.

Note: Comments and responses summarized in the table above were clarified or paraphrased in the development of this summary report.

2.4 Agency Scoping Written Comments

Following the agency scoping meeting, attendees were able to submit comments to be included in the scoping process and project record on forms provided, by letter, e-mail, or fax. The comment forms, letters, and e-mails are also attached (Appendix E). Table 2 summarizes the written agency comments.

Table 2. Written agency comments

Agency	Comment Summary
ADOT Southern Region Traffic Engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider access to existing highways system as a criterion for location. If more regional traffic can use this corridor, then existing corridors may be more viable as well.
ADOT Tucson District – Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid one open and two closed landfills north of SR 287, between Coolidge and Florence. Consider having a hydraulic engineer evaluate where bridges could be safely located (with respect to current/proposed mining activities) over both the Queen Creek and Gila River.
Arizona Game and Fish Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerned with fragmentation, degradation, complete loss of wildlife habitat, and future degradation of wildlife populations and habitats from direct and indirect effects. Concerned with wildlife collisions. Concerned with diversions and impediments of important historic wildlife movement corridors and linkages. Concerned with the introduction and spread of invasive plant species. Concerned with the facilitation of unauthorized off-road access to previously undisturbed areas. Concerned with loss of access to public/state trust land for hunting and recreation. Concerned with negative impacts to special status and common native wildlife species. Encourage avoidance, mitigation of potential negative impacts. Supportive of placing the proposed transportation corridor on the west side of Picacho Mountain on previously disturbed land. Supportive of using or replacing parallel existing roadways or railroads. Maintain wildlife connections between the Mineral, San Tan, and Picacho mountains, and the Gila River. Avoid disrupting wildlife linkages. Secure funds to identify wildlife corridors within the study area and develop mitigation measures. Use the Heritage Data Management System to provide documentation of special status species within and adjacent to the corridor. Survey the area for special status species and habitats and identify measures to help minimize impacts resulting from the proposed transportation corridor. Design a route that avoids and minimizes impacts to desert washes, floodplains, and the Gila River. Do not impact implementation of the Pinal County Open Space and Trails Master Plan.

Table 2. Written agency comments

Agency	Comment Summary
City of Casa Grande	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer western alignment of the Corridor Opportunity Area • Consider east-west connectivity in relation to positioning the corridor. Freeway level connections east/west should be part of the concept. • Consider traffic interchange placement.
City of Coolidge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Western leg [of the Corridor Opportunity Area] from Coolidge south would serve existing population centers. • The eastern leg [of the Corridor Opportunity Area] would run primarily through unpopulated state trust lands and would poorly serve existing communities. • Consider the following other issues as part of the study: generating stations, substations, TransCanada generating station (south of Coolidge, east of Randolph) and the SRP 500kV line.
Departments of the Army and Air Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support protecting the Rittenhouse Auxiliary Airfield (located at the northeast corner of Schnepf Road and Ocotillo Road), locating a highway within two miles of this airfield would impact National Guard training. • Concern regarding a potential freeway's affect on day and night helicopter training use at Rittenhouse Airfield. Freeway-associated structures (light poles, etc.) may negatively affect safe flight operations • Avoid encroachment on the Florence Military Reservation and associated facilities.
Flood Control District of Maricopa County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Flood Control District of Maricopa County (District) is currently conducting the Powerline, Vineyard Road, and Rittenhouse Flood Retarding Structures Rehabilitation or Replacement Project. • These dams range from 16 feet to 24 feet in height and are approximately 12 miles long, are operated and maintained by the District and should be considered as part of the study. • The District will work with ADOT and share any information that is completed.
Town of Florence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsupportive of a corridor west of the Anthem Merrill Ranch development. • A corridor five or more miles from downtown Florence would have a negative impact to the downtown economy and future development plans. • The corridor maps should reflect current and planned SRP development (e.g., 230/500kV transmission lines, solar development, etc.) • The corridor maps should show the Magic Ranch Community, Poston Butte (F Mountain) and the two buttes along Hunt Highway at the Franklin Road alignment as "avoid." • Proposed development along Arizona Farms Road may not occur by 2020. Suggest coordinating with developers regarding the corridor alignment process. • Development upstream of the Magma Dam may minimize the role of this structure over time. Corridor planning may incorporate an alternative design to the current dam structure. • Avoid development on, or directly adjacent to, the Florence Military Reservation and Waste Management/Pinal County landfill at Highway 287. • Keep a distance between the proposed alignment and the Magma Junction area as there are potential future plans for industrial development, and railroad/freight corridor. This might also be an opportunity for a multi-modal transportation corridor incorporating commuter and inter-city rail, transit-oriented development plans and overall enhanced compatibility. • Keep proposed alignment off of major existing corridors, such as SR 79, SR 287 and Hunt Highway. • There are wild-horse crossings from the Gila River Indian Community to open space areas east of Florence. • Concerned about a route that goes too far east (between Heritage Road and Bella Vista Road), due to potential loss of economic development impacts. • There is a floodplain in the western section of the Corridor Opportunity Area that would require a larger crossing of the Gila River. This crossing would remove potential valuable land in the area and would be more costly and challenging, while minimizing the number of interchanges that could provide economic benefit to the town. • Request a meeting with the study team and town to discuss the Downtown Florence North End Framework Plan. • Suggest further discussions about access management and traffic interchange locations to ensure that access is properly placed to support economic development.

Table 2. Written agency comments

Agency	Comment Summary
City of Mesa (Engineering Department)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corridor is much needed and will be a great catalyst for economic development and regional connectivity. • Add Mesa land ownership to maps. • Include the Flood Control District of Maricopa County in the study. • Discuss utility needs (not just electric) to provide routes as the area develops. • The study area also crosses the Mormon Battalion Trail along the Gila River.
City of Mesa (Office of the City Manager, Pinal County Farm Land Project Manager)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the opportunity to have the North-South Corridor near Mesa farm lands. • Consider an alignment that minimizes impacts to large-property owners. • Include traffic interchanges every mile to accommodate access. • Locate high speed rail corridor alternatives east of roadway alternatives.
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider floodplains and drainages from an environmental and engineering perspective. • Evaluate drainages under 'environmental data' due to Section 401, 404 and riparian qualities in the corridor. • Avoid drainages that have riparian vegetation.
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CAP is a BOR-owned facility that conveys Colorado River water to agricultural and municipal users in the Tucson and Phoenix areas. • BOR is providing funds to support the rehabilitation of San Carlos Irrigation Project facilities, in addition to preparing an EIS for this effort (see 75 <i>Federal Register</i> 53332).
U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include in the development of each alternative, where applicable, the analysis of permanent conversion of prime and unique farmland per the Farmland Protection Policy Act.
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose and need should clearly identify why the project is being proposed and focus on desired outcomes of the project rather than a pre-determined solution. • The range of alternatives should include a no-build alternative, improvements to existing facilities, and alternatives that incorporate transit options. • Recommend alternatives be evaluated that incorporate improvements to existing facilities, such as Ironwood Road, Hunt Highway, and SR 87. • Recommend focus alternatives west of the CAP canal, where feasible, in order to minimize potential induced growth and habitat fragmentation-related impacts. • Recommend coordination with the Federal Transit Administration and METRO in the design and analysis of potential transit options, including the Phoenix-Tucson Interdty Rail. • Identify current transit facilities/operations and plans for future expansion. • Recommend the Draft EIS identify activities that FHWA, ADOT, and other agencies can take to enhance transit ridership and effectively increase overall mobility throughout the region. • Evaluate the need for Clean Water Act Section 404 permits for waters of the U.S, given the proximity to important aquatic resources, including the Gila River, CAP Canal and McClellan Wash. • Recommend a Clean Water Act jurisdictional delineation be completed and submitted to the Corps of Engineers for verification prior to release of the Draft EIS. • Demonstrate that all potential impacts to waters and wetlands of the U.S. have been avoided and minimized to the greatest extent possible. • Include a systematic analysis for drainage crossings that identifies and prioritizes the potential for improvements to the aquatic system and for wildlife use at each crossing, as applicable. • Incorporate a buffer zone for the Gila River in the design of alternatives to adequately protect the river from indirect impacts. • Recommend estimating temporary and permanent impacts to waters of the U.S. for each alternative studied, including acres of waters impacted. • Quantify the benefits from measures and modifications designed to avoid and minimize impacts to

Table 2. Written agency comments

Agency	Comment Summary
	<p>wetland and water resources for each alternative studied and include in the Draft EIS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The waters assessment for each alternative should be of an appropriate scope and detail to identify sensitive areas or aquatic systems with functions highly susceptible to change. Recommend providing enough information to compare impacts and make a determination of which alternative will have fewer impacts to aquatic resources. • Recommend including the classification of waters and the geographic extent of waters and adjacent riparian areas. • Recommend characterizing and assessing the functional condition of waters and adjacent riparian areas. • Describe the extent and nature of stream channel alteration, riverine corridor continuity, and buffered tributaries. • Include wildlife species affected that could reasonably be expected to use waters or associated riparian habitat and sensitive plant taxa. • Analyze the potential flood flow alteration. • Characterize the hydrologic linkage to any impaired water body. • Analyze the potential water quality impact and potential effects to designated uses. • Address techniques proposed for minimizing surface water contamination due to increased runoff from additional impervious surfaces. • Recommendations for each fully evaluated alternative should include a detailed discussion of ambient air conditions for the study area's attainment or non-attainment status for National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and potential for air quality impacts (including cumulative and indirect impacts) from construction and operation of the project and include estimates of all criteria pollutant emissions and diesel particulate matter (DPM) in the Draft EIS. • Recommend the disclosure of health risks associated with vehicle emissions and how the proposed project will affect current emission levels. • The Draft EIS should describe any applicable local, state or federal air quality requirements. • The Draft EIS should ensure that the emissions from both the construction and operational phases of the project conform to the approved State Implementation Plan and do not cause or contribute to violations of the NAAQS. • The Draft EIS should describe how any traffic estimates were developed and how these traffic estimates relate to regional transportation estimates included in the regional transportation plan. • Include a construction emissions mitigation plan with the Record of Decision using Best Available Control Measures for PM10, fugitive dust source controls, mobile and stationary source controls, and administrative controls. • Provide a quantitative analysis of the greenhouse gas emissions that will result from implementation of the project and identify measures to minimize and reduce emissions and discuss the full implication of those emissions on the greater Phoenix metropolitan area. • Recommend identifying measures that will be taken to minimize greenhouse gas emissions and promote initiatives to reduce the project's overall carbon footprint. • Concern expressed about the potential indirect impacts (40 CFR Part 1508.8(b)) of this project related to growth-inducement. Improved access to undeveloped areas may affect the location and timing of growth on surrounding lands, leading to indirect impacts to air quality, waters, biological resources, etc. • Suggest preparation of analysis of growth-related impacts early in project development. • Use guidance for preparers of growth-related indirect impact analyses, identifying how the project will affect the location and/or timing of planned growth, types of resources that may be affected by growth, mitigation to reduce impacts, and integrate smart growth and sustainable principles. • Suggest an analysis of potential resources that may be affected by the increased "zone of influence" associated with interchanges and impacting resources outside of the right-of-way. • Suggest including a discussion of mitigation strategies to reduce impacts if adverse impacts cannot be avoided or minimized. • Draft EIS should include discussion of actions that can be taken during project development to foster the implementation of smart growth strategies in the project area, including limiting the number of exits in

Table 2. Written agency comments

Agency	Comment Summary
	<p>rural areas, increasing distance between exits, working with transit providers to ensure multimodal opportunities are available between small communities and job centers, and coordinate with local municipalities in the pursuit of zoning ordinances that encourage smart growth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cumulative impacts should consider non-transportation projects, such as large-scale developments and approved urban planning that is reasonably foreseeable and identified in city and county planning documents. • The cumulative impact analysis should describe the “identifiable present effects” to various resources attributed to past actions. • Suggest conducting a thorough cumulative impact assessment that includes a complete list of reasonably foreseeable actions, including non-transportation projects. • Suggest identifying potential large, landscape-level regional impacts, as well as potential large-scale mitigation measures. • Identify whether the proposed alternatives may disproportionately and adversely affect low income or minority populations in the surrounding area, and provide appropriate mitigation measures for any adverse impacts. • Provide opportunities for incorporating public input especially in environmental justice communities into the facility design process to promote context sensitive design. • Document the process used for community involvement and communication, including all measures to specifically outreach to potential environmental justice communities. Include an analysis of results achieved by reaching out to these populations. • Assess potential impacts to historic, archeological, and cultural resources and coordinate with affected tribes and other interested parties. • Identify the status of any Memorandum of Understanding with the State Historic Preservation Officer regarding the project. • Document methods for determining potential impacts to cultural/historic resources, address mitigation techniques and coordinate with the State Historic Preservation Officer. • Consider special status species, such as the Desert Tortoise and Tucson Shovel-Nosed snake, among others, and coordinate early with Arizona Game and Fish Department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in order to avoid and minimize impacts to species to the greatest extent possible. • Identify all petitioned and listed threatened and endangered species and critical habitat within the project area and assess which species and critical habitats might be directly or indirectly affected by each alternative. • Include the status of the Endangered Species Act Section 7 in the consultation process. • Identify proposed methods to minimize the spread of invasive species and use native plant and tree species where revegetation is planned. • Clearly demonstrate compliance with Section 4(f) (49 U.S.C. 303).
Town of Queen Creek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest keeping alternatives west of CAP between Apache Junction and Queen Creek. • Consider using a western route until the intersection of the Union Pacific Railroad and the Magma Railroad. • Use of an eastern route would locate the proposed freeway in close proximity to SR 79, thus minimizing the regional benefits of the corridor.
Western Area Power Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerned with activities under transmission lines, towers, conductors, etc. • Concerned with impacts to sensitive natural and cultural resources.

3 Study Briefings and Presentations

In keeping with the study’s Public Involvement Plan, ADOT provided briefings to elected officials, as well as presentations to council meetings, work sessions and teams prior to the public scoping meetings. Presentations and briefings were provided to the entities listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Study briefings and presentations

Agency	Date of Briefing
Coolidge City Council Work Session	October 11, 2010
Pinal County Board of Supervisors –Individual	October 12, 2010
Eloy City Council – Individual	October 18, 2010
Casa Grande City Council Work Session	October 18, 2010
Apache Junction City Council Work Session	October 18, 2010
Gila River Indian Community Transportation Technical Team	October 19, 2010

A summary of comments, questions, and issues expressed at the briefings is included below:

- Ensure planned and existing development within the study area is considered and incorporate changes related to these developments into the study.
- Consider adjacent studies and projects, and previous planning efforts in the study process.
- Prioritize regional transportation improvements based on community needs.
- Need to maintain regional mobility.
- Questions related to the planning, growth and development assumptions used to support the need for the proposed transportation corridor.
- Support the effort to plan ahead of projected growth.
- Support for the proposed transportation corridor due to anticipated growth and urbanization.
- Concern regarding whether the proposed transportation corridor will induce growth.
- Maintain community cohesion.
- Minimize negative impacts to the local economy.
- Support the economic benefits the proposed transportation corridor may bring to the local community.
- Coordinate with local municipalities, utilities and environmental agencies to protect open space.
- Concern regarding potential impacts the proposed transportation corridor may have on threatened and endangered species.
- Concerns regarding potential impacts to air quality.
- Concern for the protection of prehistoric and historic cultural resources within the study area.
- Concern related to subsidence near CAP facilities in the Eloy and Coolidge area
- Incorporate utilities and their associated districts into the study.
- Integrate commuter rail and other multimodal transportation options into the study.
- Preferences expressed regarding the location and design of the proposed transportation corridor and corridor-associated improvements:

- Provide a connection with the proposed SR 802 (SR 24) and US 60 alignments.
- Locate the corridor on the west side of the Corridor Opportunity Area to best serve existing communities.
- Locate the corridor west of Picacho Mountain and avoid Mount Newman.
- Consider utilizing previously disturbed areas in locating the corridor.
- Locate traffic interchanges to allow access to cities and population centers.
- Consider economic development, job creation, and sustainability in corridor location process.
- Utilize existing linear corridors to limit right-of-way impacts.
- Accommodate farming activities in design (e.g., bridge widths, etc.).
- Concerns regarding the lack of funding for the design and construction of the corridor. Consider P3 funding options.
- Address freight movement in the study.
- Question regarding the right-of-way acquisition process (full and partial acquisitions).
- Questions regarding the study schedule and process.
- Comment regarding whether public input is an important component of the study process.
- Suggestion to form non-political working group.

In addition, the following organizations were recommended during the briefings and presentations as entities that may be interested in a study-related presentation:

- Central Arizona Regional Economic Development Foundation
- Copper Corridor Economic Development Council
- Economic Development Group of Eloy
- Pinal County Government Alliance
- Pinal Partnership

4 Public Scoping

4.1 Public Scoping Notification Flier

The study team prepared and distributed a self-mailing informational notification flier (Appendix F) inviting recipients to four public scoping meetings hosted at the locations listed in Table 4.

Table 4. Public scoping meetings

Date	Location
Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2010	Union Center at Merrill Ranch 3925 North Sun City Boulevard Florence, AZ 85132
Thursday, Oct. 21, 2010	Picacho Elementary School 17865 South Vail Road Picacho, AZ 85141
Tuesday, Oct. 26, 2010	Apache Junction High School 2525 South Ironwood Drive Apache Junction, AZ 85120
Thursday, Oct. 28, 2010	Skyline Ranch K-8 School 1084 West San Tan Hills Drive Queen Creek, AZ 85143

The notification included information about the study and an invitation for recipients to attend any of four scoping meetings. The flier was mailed on October 5, 2010, to approximately 4,600 residents, businesses, government officials and other key stakeholders and interested parties in the study area. It was e-mailed to approximately 1,950 stakeholders on October 6, 2010.

4.2 Newspaper Display Notices

Four newspaper display notices announcing the public scoping meetings were published, as noted in Table 5.

Table 5. Newspaper notices

Media	Publish Date	Distribution	Circulation
<i>Tri-Valley Dispatch</i>	Oct. 6, 2010	Casa Grande, Eloy, Picacho, Florence	16,000
<i>East Valley Tribune</i>	Oct. 8, 2010	Queen Creek, Gilbert	100,000
<i>Apache Junction/Gold Canyon Independent</i>	Oct. 13, 2010	Apache Junction, Gold Canyon	20,000
<i>Queen Creek/San Tan Valley Independent</i>	Oct. 13, 2010	Queen Creek, San Tan Valley	15,000

The newspaper notice is attached in Appendix G.

4.3 Web Site

The study web site was developed and the web address was published on all informational materials. Public scoping meeting information and project details were provided on the web site:

www.azdot.gov/northsouthcorridorstudy.

4.4 Public Scoping Meetings

The purpose of the public scoping meetings was to provide an overview of the study process, discuss the environmental and engineering processes and schedule, present the Corridor Opportunity Area and provide the opportunity for the public to ask questions and provide feedback. Each meeting was held from 6 to 8 p.m. and was identical in presentation content. At each meeting, attendees signed in and were given packets of information, which included an agenda, fact sheet with Corridor Opportunity Area information, frequently asked questions, comment form and question card.

Each meeting included a formal presentation at 6:15 p.m., followed by a question-and-answer session, and maps and displays were available for review and comment. A copy of the presentation and display boards are attached (Appendix H). Attendance at each meeting location is documented in Table 6.

Table 6. Meeting attendance

Date	Location	Attendance
Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2010	Union Center at Merrill Ranch, Florence	52
Thursday, Oct. 21, 2010	Pi ca cho Elementary School, Pi ca cho	14
Tuesday, Oct. 26, 2010	Apache Junction High School, Apache Junction	55
Thursday, Oct. 28, 2010	Skyline Ranch K-8 School, Queen Creek	29
	Total	150

The sign-in sheets for the public scoping meetings are attached in Appendix I.

4.5 Public Scoping Comment Summary

During the scoping comment period, comments could be submitted in a variety of ways, including in writing (e.g., comment survey or comment form), by telephone, e-mail, fax and at the public meetings. Meeting attendees were encouraged to complete and submit comments by November 11, 2010. Copies of the written comments received are attached (Appendix J).

4.5.1 Summary of Comments Received

A comment survey was distributed at the public meetings whereby citizens could rank environmental and engineering issues by importance, list preferences for evaluating future corridor locations and write questions and comments to be submitted to the study team (Appendix J). Eleven comment forms were submitted and the top three environmental issues identified were:

- Economic development
- Air quality
- Threatened and endangered species

Additional issues of concern listed were: aesthetics/visual resource, water resources, employment, noise, land use, hazardous contamination and community cohesion.

The comment survey asked respondents to provide feedback regarding issues to be considered as the study team identifies corridor alternatives. Of the comments forms submitted, the following issues received the most responses:

- Improve access to US 60 and I-10
- Maintain existing local roads and highways
- Improve public transportation services (e.g., bus, rail, etc.)
- Improve local traffic and circulation

The comment survey also asked if respondents agreed with the purpose and need for the study, as presented. The following purpose and need elements received the most responses:

- Accommodate projected traffic to relieve anticipated congestion
- Relieve I-10 traffic
- Provide a direct connection to the eastern portion of the Phoenix metropolitan area

A quantification of all comments (e.g., comment survey, question and answer card, letter, e-mail, etc.) by issue is provided in Table 7. In general, comments were received via comment survey, letter, e-mail, and at the public scoping meetings. The study team received 13 comment surveys, three letters, two e-mails, and 38 comments/questions were submitted during the public meetings. A total of 56 comments were received during the scoping period. Responses were typically submitted via the method in which the comment was received (e.g., e-mailed comments were responded to via e-mail).

Table 7. Issues received

Issue	Number Received
Agency coordination	2
Air quality	5
Community cohesion	2
Cultural resources	3
Cumulative impacts	1
Design	20
Employment	2
Existing and planned development	2
Fissures	1
Funding/public private partnership	6
General public involvement	9
General transportation	3
Hazardous materials	3
Land use	4
Multimodal options	3
Noise	4
Rail connection	2
Recreation and open space preservation	2
Socioeconomic impact/real property	12
Study process	6
Study purpose and need	2

Table 7. Issues received

Issue	Number Received
Threatened and endangered species	4
Traffic	2
Utilities	1
Visual/aesthetic resources	4
Water resources	3
Wildlife	1
Non-project related	4

In addition to the comment surveys which allowed commenters to rank issues of importance, comments were also submitted, either at the public scoping meetings or following, with specific details pertaining to the following issues:

Agency Coordination

Comments provided encouraged the study team to coordinate with relevant local and state entities and agencies.

The study team coordinates regularly with federal, state, and local agencies and stakeholders throughout the entire study process.

Air Quality

Comments submitted to the study team regarding air quality urged an evaluation of air quality and greenhouse gas emissions given the introduction of the proposed facility and additional vehicular traffic in the Pinal County area. In addition, one commenter recommended that the study team produce a dust mitigation plan during construction of the facility.

The study team will provide both an existing conditions and environmental impact evaluation pertaining to air quality, following the completion of the ASR, for inclusion in the EIS.

Cultural Resources

The comments submitted pertaining to cultural resources supported additional study and inventory and avoidance or preservation of potential historic areas.

The study team will conduct a comprehensive cultural resources evaluation as well as coordinate with the State Historic Preservation Office during the refinement of the Corridor Opportunity Area for inclusion in the EIS.

Design

The majority of comments submitted were design-related and included comments such as:

- Consider locations that will be completed most expeditiously
- Consider connections to SR 802 (SR 24), US 60 and I-10
- Consider expanding existing roads
- Why use undeveloped land?

- Follow the CAP canal
- Consider alternatives that will provide connections to other roads and will save money
- When will east-west connections be made?

Comments related to the design of the corridor will be considered during the development as part of the Alternatives Selection Report (ASR), which is the next phase of study.

Existing and Planned Development

Several commenters also urged the study team to avoid existing development and areas where planned development will occur. Comments were also provided regarding the inclusion of the Florence Copper project and Superstition Vistas development in the study process.

Planned developments to 2020 were avoided during the development of the Corridor Opportunity Area and will be considered as areas to avoid in future alternatives evaluations. Coordination with development projects within the study occurs throughout the study process. The Superstition Vistas area is within the future planning area, and the study team is using information from the Superstition Vistas Plan, as well as information regarding other future planned development in the area.

Fissures

Comments expressed concern related to the many fissures in the study area, and the stability of these fissures after groundwater has been utilized by pending development.

Fissures and ground subsidence are among the factors being considered in developing and evaluating alternative alignments for the corridor.

Funding/Public Private Partnership

Six comments were submitted regarding study funding and how project construction would be funded. Representative comments included:

- What is the funding source for future phases of the project?
- How is funding obtained?
- Are toll roads being considered?
- Will public private partnerships be considered and/or developed?
- Will this study use economic stimulus funding?

Comments regarding project funding were responded to with an explanation that the study is currently funded; however, a funding source for construction has not yet been identified. The current study is following a federal process, in order to be able to use federal funds in the future. A public private partnership is one type of funding option for the construction phase of the project, if approved. This study will not utilize economic stimulus funds, as those funds are reserved for “shovel ready” projects.

General Public Involvement

Comments categorized as general public involvement included all comments submitted about public meeting logistics, and requests for more information. A suggestion was made to hold meetings during the November to May timeframe, since many people travel away from Arizona during the summer months.

General Transportation

Comments categorized as general transportation included support for a North-South corridor to be constructed, and support for access to adjacent cities, towns, and landmarks. In addition, comments were provided regarding potential traffic impacts, both local and regional, the corridor may have on residential and commercial property and development.

Responses to general transportation comments were noted and specific questions about multimodal options were relayed to the appropriate ADOT representative, study team members, or local agency. Traffic studies will be conducted as part of the L/DCR.

Recreation/Open Space

Several comments urged the study team to preserve the existing recreational and open space areas as identified by Pinal County, as well as considering the impact of a transportation route on opportunities for quiet recreation.

The study team will inventory existing and proposed recreational and open space areas during the ASR process and will include an evaluation of impacts to these areas in the EIS.

Multimodal Options

Comments provided were both supportive and unsupportive of multimodal options. Comments urged the study team to evaluate the potential of a multimodal system within the corridor. The concept of a dual corridor for rail and vehicular traffic was recommended for the area between Phoenix and Tucson.

Multimodal options are being evaluated as part of this study. In addition, the study team is coordinating with the Phoenix-Tucson Intercity Rail study team regarding the potential integration of multimodal options.

Rail Connection

Two comments were submitted regarding a potential rail connection or use of rail for freight hauling. Responses to rail-related comments were taken into consideration by the study team and/or shared with ADOT Multimodal Planning representatives for inclusion in other rail studies as appropriate.

Socioeconomic Impact/Real Property

Six comments were submitted regarding socioeconomic impact, property value, and property acquisition process. Comments were submitted that questioned the growth projections used for the study given the economic downturn and urged the study team to re-evaluate socioeconomic data being used to reflect current conditions for growth. Of the comments submitted regarding property acquisition, the majority of the commenters were not supportive of their properties being acquired and expressed concern regarding the impact to property values.

Specific information about property acquisition and future economic impacts was not available during this initial stage of the study. It is ADOT's goal to locate this corridor in a location that avoids or minimizes adverse impacts on existing development.

Study Process

Comments categorized as study process included comments about the study schedule, timing of construction or when the freeway would be operational, and development of the materials presented. Representative comments about study process included:

- Why does ADOT conduct studies so far in advance of construction?
- Who decides what projects get priority?
- How do projects get prioritized?
- How are previous studies' recommendations incorporated?
- When will the freeway be operational?

Responses to study process comments included an explanation that the study must follow federal guidelines to be considered for federal funding. The current process will identify a corridor to help preserve right-of-way ahead of development. Information was also provided regarding the prioritization process for ADOT projects. Information and recommendations from previous studies are considered in the study process.

Study Purpose and Need

Comments questioned the need for the study and further asked what problem the study was addressing.

Responses provided explained that planned growth (identified by local agencies) in the Sun Corridor show the need for this corridor. Studies identifying the need for the corridor have been ongoing since 2003.

Utilities

One comment was submitted regarding on-going utility projects in the area, specifically SRP-related projects. This comment urged the study team to coordinate with utility services during the alternatives development phase of the study.

The study team will coordinate with utilities located within the study area.

Wildlife

One comment was submitted pertaining to wildlife and included suggestions that the study team include an evaluation of threatened and endangered species and an evaluation of the affect of the potential facility on wildlife crossings, and the introduction of invasive species. Concern was also expressed regarding the potential fragmentation and loss of habitat. The comment recommended that the study look to mitigate impacts to wildlife and habitat.

The study team will complete comprehensive biological analysis that includes an evaluation of wildlife, flora and fauna, threatened and endangered species, existing habitat and wildlife crossings as part of the EIS.

Non-Project Related

Comments regarding other projects adjacent to the study area were received and these questions have been submitted to the appropriate study team representatives.

4.5.2 Comment Summary Map

During each public scoping meeting, maps were displayed for attendees to view and provide comment. Appendix K shows a summary of all comments provided on the maps during the public scoping meetings.

4.5.3 Public Meeting Survey Results

A meeting survey was also distributed at the public scoping meetings. The survey contained five questions. Thirteen responses to this survey were received. A summary of the responses to each question is documented in Table 8 and attached in Appendix L.

Table 8. Public scoping meeting survey responses

Question	Response
How did you hear about the meeting?	Invite: 1 Newspaper: 6 E-Mail: 4 Friend: 2 Other: 2 (City Council Meeting and Town Committee)
How helpful were the following resources in your understanding of the project?	Display Boards: 4 (very helpful); 6 (somewhat helpful) Handouts: 5 (very helpful); 3 (somewhat helpful); 1 (not helpful) Presentation: 7 (very helpful); 2 (somewhat helpful); Staff/Study Team: 5 (very helpful); 2 (somewhat helpful)
How would you rate this facility for holding future meetings?	Tuesday, Oct. 19 (Union Center at Merrill Ranch, Florence) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very good: 6 respondents Thursday, Oct. 21 (Picacho Elementary School, Picacho) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very good: 1 respondent Tuesday, Oct. 26 (Apache Junction High School, Apache Junction) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very good: 1 respondent • Good: 1 respondent
What methods or aspects of the public meeting and public process do you like best and least?	Best: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visuals were very good • Meeting format (presentation, question and answer, and open house) • Meeting was well organized Least: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direction and signage was not good, and location was hard to find. Facility looked closed and empty. Small sporadic signs were difficult to read (Oct. 19 meeting location). • Did not like the one-on-one aspect.
What can we do to improve the process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve meeting notification • Team did a great job • Hold the presentation away from the display tables and project team. Both are individually valuable and should be freely accessible throughout the time allotted.

Appendix A

Notice of Intent

Appendix B

Agency Scoping Meeting Invitation Letter

Appendix C

Agency Scoping Meeting Attendance

Appendix D

Agency Scoping Meeting Presentation and Displays

Appendix E

Agency Scoping Written Comments

Appendix F

Public Scoping Meeting Notification Flier

Appendix G

Public Scoping Meeting Newspaper Notices

Appendix H

Public Scoping Meeting Presentation and Displays

Appendix I

Public Scoping Meeting Attendance

Appendix J

Public Scoping Meeting Written Comments

Appendix K

Public Scoping Meeting Comment Summary Map

Appendix L

Meeting Survey

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