



**La Cañada Drive
River Road to Ina Road
Ina Road to Calle Concordia
Project Update, Winter 2008-2009**



**Message from Priscilla S. Cornelio, P.E.
Director, Pima County Department of Transportation**

December 2008

Subject: La Cañada Drive Response to Petitions

Dear Neighbor:

It's been a busy year for all of us involved with the La Cañada Drive projects. This newsletter is intended to provide you with information regarding the status of the La Cañada Drive projects. If you haven't already viewed the project Web sites for more detailed project information, they can be found at www.roadprojects.pima.gov.

Project History

The original project on La Cañada Drive, from Ina Road to Lambert Lane, was approved by the voters in the 1997 Transportation Bond Election. In 2001, the Pima County Department of Transportation (PCDOT) prepared the Environmental Assessment and Mitigation Report (EAMR), which was approved by the Board of Supervisors (BOS) in 2002, providing mitigation for 13 locations with noise walls from Ina Road to Calle Concordia. In April of 2002, the County received a petition requesting continuous noise-mitigation and visual screening walls on La Cañada Drive from Ina Road to Magee Road. Shortly after, in 2002, the project was placed on hold, and the town of Oro Valley took over the project administration of La Cañada Drive from Calle Concordia north to Lambert Lane.

In May 2006, the voters approved the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) Plan (half-cent sales tax) that included supplemental funding for the La Cañada Drive: Ina Road to Calle Concordia project and funding for the La Cañada Drive: Ina Road to River Road project. Prior to the RTA plan, the County had obtained federal funding to begin the planning stages for the portion south of Ina Road.

In 2003, the department adopted new Pima County Noise-Abatement Procedures (PCNAP) and standardized the use of rubberized asphalt as being the preferred pavement surface throughout Pima County. The use of rubberized asphalt as a paving surface has been demonstrated to produce substantial reductions in traffic noise near roadways – anywhere from three to five decibels (dBA). As a result, the County takes a 3 dBA credit for the use of rubberized asphalt and will mitigate traffic noise with walls only if traffic noise levels are predicted to reach 66 dBA after the 3 dBA credit is applied.

When the project resumed in 2007 and the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was reunited, PCDOT updated the traffic and noise reports based on the new PCNAP and to account for the use of rubberized asphalt. Consequently, the new noise report demonstrated that only three walls on the north segment of La Cañada Drive north of Ina Road were warranted. The project south of Ina Road will use federal noise criteria, providing mitigation at 66 dBA and above if a noise wall provides a noise reduction and is feasible. Rubberized asphalt pavement will be used, but a 3 dBA credit will not apply because of the federal status.

The CAC, along with many affected residents, opposed the new noise reports. We received several phone calls, e-mails, letters, meeting requests, etc. requesting additional, unwarranted walls along this portion of La Cañada Drive. In summer 2008, PCDOT hosted two workshops to gain an understanding of the community's concerns and requests. These workshops were very helpful to the project team as the concerns related to noise, access, views, drainage, etc. The feedback from the workshops was reviewed and analyzed, and PCDOT subsequently made the decision to honor the EAMR (13 walls) approved by the BOS in 2002 for the north segment.

At recent BOS meetings during the call to the audience, members of the public have expressed individual concerns, requesting additional walls on the north segment. Additionally, an October 2008 petition was submitted at a Nov. 4, 2008 BOS meeting with 378 signatures requesting sound and screening barrier walls that provide the following:

1. A safety barrier, 2. A sound barrier, 3. Protection from property devaluation, 4. A visual barrier, 5. A psychological barrier, 6. Consistency with similar recent road widening improvement projects, and 7. Protection of the same quality of life after completion of the project as we have today.

In the last month, the project team has been reviewing the cost and feasibility to install the additional unwarranted walls requested along the La Cañada Drive corridor. The cost of the unwarranted walls is approximately \$11.5 million above the currently budgeted amounts. The current funding for the north project is estimated at \$37.8 million with \$22.5 million in RTA funds. The south project is estimated at \$46.0 million with \$5.1 million in RTA funds. At this time, additional funding is not available, and with declining revenues it likely will not be available anytime in the future.

With decreasing revenues from the State of Arizona to balance the budget deficit, a sharp decline in Highway User Revenue Funds (HURF – a gasoline tax) revenues due to the steep gas prices this past summer and based on a troubled economy, there is no additional funding within PCDOT to fund unwarranted noise walls.

Therefore, it is our intention to move forward with the project and construct only warranted mitigation to meet the requirements of the RTA as approved by the voters, and to have the project constructed by the end of the first implementation period, fiscal year 2011. Although



Priscilla Cornelio, center, listens to neighbors' concerns at a June 2008 noise-mitigation workshop.

we will continue with the project without the unwarranted walls, property owners may continue to pursue alternative ways to add walls to their properties through an improvement district, whereby property owners work together to identify alternative funding sources. We will continue to work with the community to form an improvement district if that is a viable option for the neighbors.

I do regret that we don't have the funding to provide walls for everyone as part of these projects, and I wish we could grant all of the requests that we receive on all of our projects. We are only able to provide what is warranted with the very limited funding we have. Your understanding is greatly appreciated.

I would like to thank the CAC and all of the neighbors who have been active with the projects. Your input has been very important. We look forward to our continued work together in the coming year.

With best holiday wishes,



Priscilla S. Cornelio, P.E.
Director

Project Description

The Pima County Department of Transportation (PCDOT) and the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) are preparing preliminary plans and environmental clearance documents to improve La Cañada Drive from River Road to Ina Road (south segment) and are finalizing plans, environmental documents and permits to improve La Cañada Drive from Ina Road to Calle Concordia (north segment). The plans call for La Cañada Drive to be widened to four lanes in order to: accommodate increased travel demand in the area through 2030; improve vehicular, pedestrian and equestrian safety; and provide a key north-south all-weather surface for residents, commuters and emergency service providers in the northwest. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2009 for the Ina Road to Calle Concordia segment and in 2011 for the River Road to Ina Road segment.

There are a number of roadway design features on the northern segment that are slightly different than those on the southern portion. Specifically, the paved shoulders on the northern end are 10 feet wide, while the ones on the southern end are six feet wide. This is due to the fact that the standards PCDOT used during the design of the northern section in the late 1990s and early 2000s were slightly different than they are now. Although the northern project was placed on the shelf in 2003 due to lack of available construction funds, the design plan was completed to the 100% level. When the northern project was re-started in early 2007, the approach was to use the completed design from 2003 in order to save time and avoid spending any additional money on redesign costs. This would allow the other project activities — the acquisition of environmental permits, acquisition of right-of-way and coordination with utilities — to be started immediately. Upon the completion of these remaining tasks, subsequent construction efforts and activities could be started in a much shorter time frame.

Regional Transportation Authority — RTA

The RTA plan was approved on May 16, 2006, by Pima County voters. The Plan includes various modes of transportation to connect people with work, school, shopping, appointments and entertainment. The \$2.1 billion plan is funded by a countywide half-cent excise (sales) tax.

The La Cañada Drive project from Calle Concordia to River Road is scheduled to initiate construction during the first implementation period (2006-2011) of the RTA Plan (see www.rtamobility.com). The project scope includes widening La Cañada Drive to a four-lane arterial roadway with an equestrian trail, drainage

improvements and multiuse lanes. Any substantial changes proposed to the elements of the plan would require voter approval.

In January 2009, the RTA's Citizens Accountability for Regional Transportation (CART) Committee will be asked to establish a Mitigation Subcommittee to review and consider appeals from the community requesting additional mitigation on RTA projects. More information on this process will be available to the community once the subcommittee is formed.

Noise Mitigation

The 2007 Noise Study prepared for La Cañada Drive, River Road to Ina Road, was conducted using the 2003 Pima County Noise Abatement Procedure (PCNAP) and FHWA criteria because this segment is using federal funds. A traffic-noise model was prepared with 2030 traffic data to predict future noise levels at noise-sensitive properties (sensitive receivers) along the roadway corridor. Based on the above criteria, six noise walls are warranted along this segment. The approved noise report can be viewed online at the project Web site. Additionally, rubberized asphalt, which reduces roadway noise, will also be applied to the new roadway.

The 2001 Noise Study for La Cañada Drive, Ina Road to Calle Concordia, was conducted prior to implementation of the 2003 PCNAP and used project-specific noise abatement criteria in place at the time. A traffic noise model was prepared with 2020 traffic data to predict future noise levels at noise-sensitive properties (sensitive receivers) along the roadway corridor. Based on the above criteria, 13 noise walls are warranted along this segment. The approved noise report is located in Appendix B of the 2001 EAMR, which can be viewed online at the project Web site. Additionally, rubberized asphalt, which reduces roadway noise, will also be applied to the new roadway surface.

In addition to the technical noise analyses, several meetings and workshops with residents and citizens have been held, and petitions circulated and shared with PCDOT. After evaluating all the factors, input and feedback, a final determination has been made that noise walls be included on the north segment according to the 2001 approved EAMR, and on the south segment according to the FHWA noise criteria.



Citizens along the project corridor are encouraged to express and coordinate their comments and concerns through their Community Advisory Committee representatives or at one of the open houses that will be scheduled in the near future.

Right-of-Way Acquisition

Right-of-way and permanent and temporary easement requirements have been identified for the project, and the Pima County Real Property Division recently began the acquisition process for the Ina Road to Calle Concordia segment. Acquisitions for the River Road to Ina Road segment will begin when all of the necessary local and federal environmental clearances have been obtained and design work is at a greater level of detail.

In general, the acquisition process consists of Pima County Real Property appraising the property and offering fair-market value to the owner based upon comparable properties in the area. Once negotiations are complete, the transaction is closed and the easement or acquisition is recorded. Periodically, an agreement cannot be reached with individual property owners. If necessary, the BOS grants Pima County Real Property the right to acquire right-of-way and easements via the condemnation process, but only if negotiations have come to a halt.

In this regard, an agenda item was placed on the Dec. 9, 2008, BOS agenda that identified specific properties that may require BOS approval to move forward with condemnation, if necessary.

“The project team has...participated in approximately 100 individual meetings to discuss various issues and concerns...”

Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

The CACs for these projects were formed in accordance with the Pima County Community Participation and Mitigation Ordinance. This ordinance was enacted to ensure that major roadway improvement projects include:

- Adequate consideration for possible social, economic, environmental and transportation effects.
- Appropriate consideration of reasonable alternatives.
- Opportunities for interested parties to express their views early enough in the study process to influence the course of studies as well as the action taken.
- Decisions on projects that are made in the overall public interest.

To date, there have been nine CAC meetings (four on the north segment and five on the south segment). CAC members represent area residents, property owners, businesses, organizations,

The following community representatives make up the CAC for the north segment:

Ron Hilwig, Chair	Erna Haase Burkle
Jack Tebo	Doug Raine
Fred Heinrichs	Timothy Dinkel
Linda Fraser	Jerry Mitchell
Bob Burtch	

The following community representatives make up the CAC for the south segment:

Dan Bartch, Co-Chair	Roland Wadsworth
John Kaur, Co-Chair	Kirk Strang
Joseph and Denise O'Hagin	Ryan Olson
Constance Hammond	Ruben and Mary Sbayan
Charles P. Miller	Maria M. Duarte
Sam E. Roy	Jim McElhiney
Noel Robinson	Lori Franz
Linda Kelly	Gail Gault

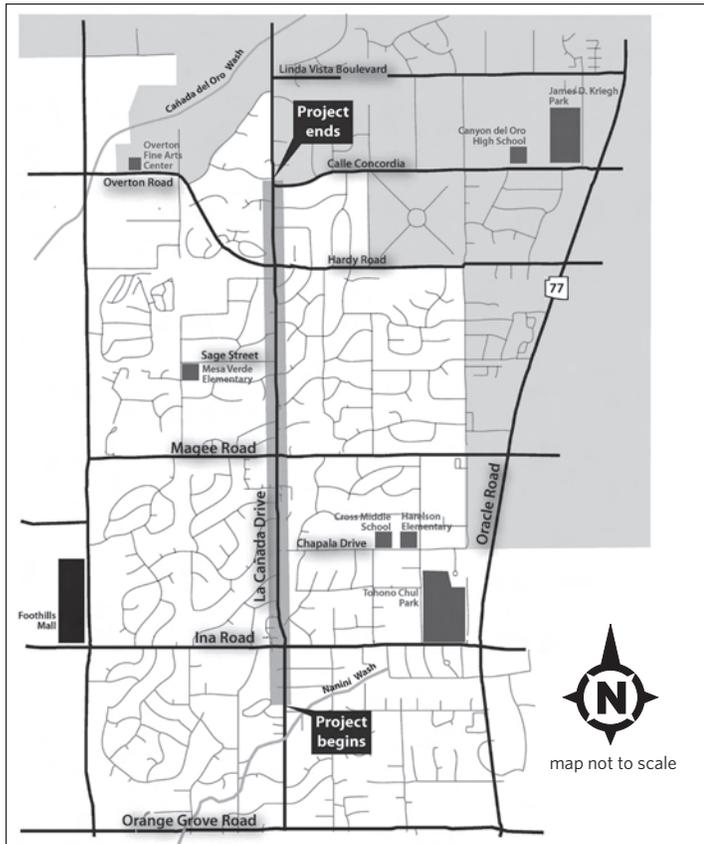
neighborhood associations and community leaders. The project team is interested in receiving feedback from the citizens along the corridor, who are encouraged to express and coordinate their comments and concerns through one of their respective CAC representatives or at one of the project open houses, and who can stay up to date on project progress by periodically visiting the project Web site noted in this newsletter.

Public Involvement

In addition to the CAC activities, PCDOT held two public informational project workshops on June 23 and 25, 2008, to discuss noise walls, retaining walls, barrier walls and other mitigation measures for the La Cañada Drive Improvement Project. Information was provided for both segments of the project: River Road to Ina Road and Ina Road to Calle Concordia. Approximately 100 people attended each workshop.

Project representatives were available to discuss individual concerns and questions, and they encouraged attendees to write down questions and concerns on comment forms provided at both workshops. The project team responded by compiling a packet of information that included: summary of the workshops, fact sheet for both segments and a list of frequently asked questions. All can be viewed on the project Web site. The project team has followed up on individual concerns and inquiries as needed.

Pima County and the project team have also participated in approximately 100 individual meetings to discuss various issues and concerns with the following: property owners affected by right-of-way acquisitions; utility companies; principals of all elementary, middle and high schools; the Amphitheater Public Schools Transportation Department; and neighborhood association representatives. Additionally, members of the project team participated in the selection process of the artist for the project's public art component. The project team looks forward to continuing its dialogue with neighbors and other interested and affected parties and to the eventual successful completion of this project so necessary to the betterment of our community.



La Cañada Drive, Ina Road to Calle Concordia (north segment)

La Cañada Drive: Ina Road to Calle Concordia Design

- La Cañada Drive will be widened to a four-lane divided roadway with a 24-foot raised median and 10-foot shoulders.
- Concrete curbs, gutters and sidewalks will be used on both sides, with a multiuse path located on the east side.
- Rubberized asphalt paving will be used to provide a durable, smooth riding surface and roadway noise reduction.
- Noise walls will be installed according to the 2001 Environmental Assessment and Mitigation Report (EAMR) approved by the Board of Supervisors (BOS).
- Artwork will be added that matches the context of the area.

Next Steps

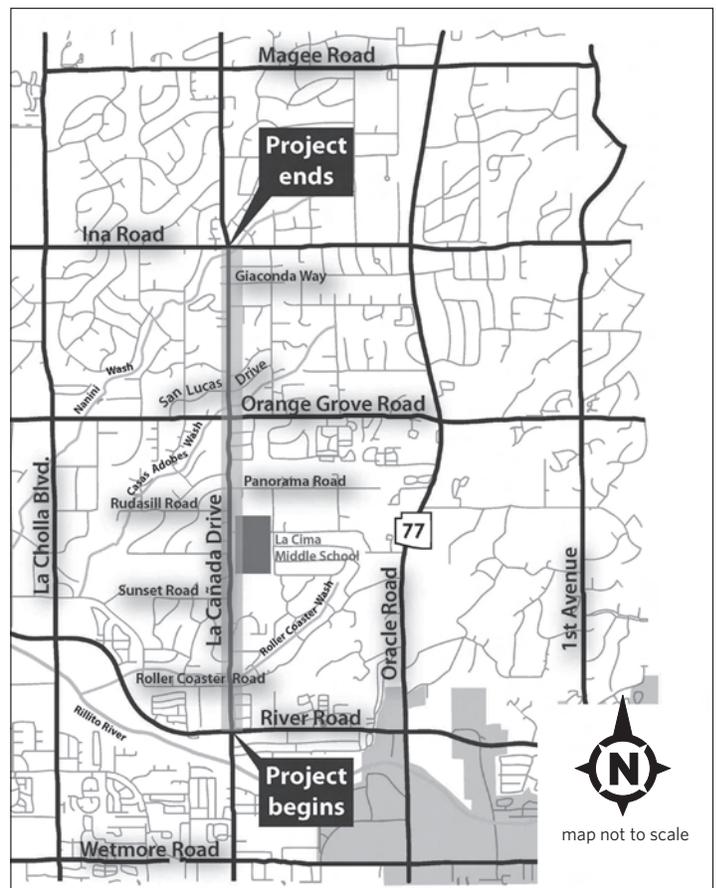
- Continue with right-of-way and easement acquisitions.
- Continue with utility design and initiate relocation activities.
- Continue coordination with United States Army Corps of Engineers to acquire permits.
- Continue final design and preparation of bidding/contract documents.
- Advertise for construction bids summer 2009.

La Cañada Drive: River Road to Ina Road Design

- The design will be accomplished in two phases: preliminary and final.
- The traffic report has been finalized and has identified the necessary lane, intersection and median opening operational and safety requirements.
- La Cañada Drive will be widened to a four-lane divided roadway with a 24-foot raised median and 6-foot shoulders.
- Concrete curbs, gutters and sidewalks will be added on both sides, with a multiuse path located on the west side.
- Rubberized asphalt paving will be used to provide a durable, smooth riding surface and roadway noise reduction.
- Noise walls will be installed according to Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) criteria.
- Artwork will be added that matches the context of the surrounding area.

Next Steps

- Complete draft Design Concept Report (DCR) and EAMR.
- EAMR review by the County and CAC early spring 2009.
- Present EAMR to BOS for approval late spring 2009.
- Pursue environmental clearance through Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and the FHWA summer 2009.
- Begin detailed design activities summer 2009.
- Initiate right-of-way activities fall 2009.



La Cañada Drive, River Road to Ina Road (south segment)

School Zone Safety

The installation of school crosswalks, High-intensity Activated CrossWalk (HAWK) crossings and pedestrian crosswalks are controversial issues for parents, schools and other involved parties. As a result, PCDOT evaluates the need for each crossing type (with distinctions made between rural and urban areas) through a warrant analysis that is based on several factors, such as pedestrian and traffic count data, safety, surrounding land uses and engineering judgment. Striping, signing and signalization of crossings are, therefore, only provided where warranted and to rectify existing or anticipated safety issues.

Along the La Cañada Drive corridor, there are three existing locations where school crossing infrastructure is currently provided (including crossing guards). They are: Roller Coaster Road (serving Lulu Walker Elementary School to the west), La Cima Middle School (serving the school to the east) and Chapala Drive (serving Cross Middle and Harelson Elementary schools to the east). Based on pedestrian counts at these locations and counts taken at Sage Street (which serves Mesa Verde Elementary to the west) and Calle Concordia (which serves Canyon del Oro High School to the east), no crosswalk infrastructure is warranted at any of these locations.

Recently, the project team met with administrators from each of the above-referenced schools and transportation staff from Amphitheater Public Schools to discuss each of these crossings and the team's findings. It was agreed that, despite warrants not being met, this project will install school crossing striping and signing at Chapala Drive, La Cima Middle School and Roller Coaster Road, if the Amphitheater Public School Transportation Department will provide long-term staffing of crossing guards at these locations. Additionally, once the project is constructed and traffic, bicycle and pedestrian patterns have stabilized, PCDOT and the Amphitheater Public Schools will assess the need for additional striping, signing and signalization at these locations.

Truck Route Signing

The segment of La Cañada Drive that lies within Pima County runs mostly through residential areas that include schools and a few small businesses that, in general, do not rely on large trucks for the deliveries. For the segment of La Cañada Drive in the town of Oro Valley (north of Calle Concordia), the Town has designated La Cañada Drive as a truck route to facilitate and serve the different businesses accessing La Cañada Drive for delivering goods and services coming from Interstate 10 through roads such as Tangerine Road and Oracle Road.

"Rubberized asphalt will be used to provide a durable, smooth riding surface and roadway noise reduction."

The Pima County Traffic Engineering Division monitors heavy vehicle usage on Pima County roadways by means of classification studies. Trucks are restricted from certain routes, but routes are not designated for the use of a specific vehicle type. In April 2006, a classification study performed for La Cañada Drive revealed that the percentage of trucks using this road ranged from 0.2 percent to 1 percent depending on the type of truck (number of axles). In particular, the percentage of large trucks (four-six axles) on La Cañada Drive was relatively insignificant. Additionally, changes have not been observed for any particular type of vehicle using La Cañada Drive for the past several years. Lastly, PCDOT records show no complaints about traffic conflicts related to trucks concerning either access issues or congestion problems.

Based on the information above, no change to the designation or restrictions related to trucks is required for La Cañada Drive. The expectation is that the same traffic trend will continue after the project construction is completed. Restricting the roadway from truck usage (especially after the improvements are made) may be desired by the residents, but is contradictory to the standard practices and procedures as described above.

Utility Work

Pima County is currently coordinating the design of this project with representatives from the many affected utility franchises throughout the corridor including: Western Area Power Administration, Southwest Gas, Tucson Electric Power, Qwest, Metropolitan Domestic Water Improvement District, Tucson Water, Comcast and the Mesa Land Water Co-op. Prior to the reconstruction of La Cañada Drive, the County has requested that each franchise relocate its facilities if its infrastructure is in conflict with the proposed La Cañada Drive improvements. Over the next few weeks and months, utility relocation work is scheduled to commence along the Ina Road to Calle Concordia segment. The work will include activities such as: clearing and salvaging of existing vegetation; excavation, trenching, shoring and backfilling; placement of temporary erosion control measures; and reseeded of disturbed areas. Each utility is responsible for obtaining the necessary permits to perform its work, but it is important for citizens to note that the permanent landscaping and irrigation of the disturbed areas will be addressed by the overall La Cañada Drive Improvement Project.



Approximately 200 people attended Pima County Department of Transportation's June 2008 information workshops for the La Cañada Drive Improvement Project. Project representatives discussed individual questions and concerns and encouraged attendees to complete comment forms. The project team then followed up on individual questions or concerns as needed. An information summary responding to questions from the public was mailed to approximately 4,000 recipients as a result of the meeting.

Contact the Project Team

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Visit the project Web sites at

Ina Road to Calle Concordia

<http://www.roadprojects.pima.gov/LaCanadaIna/>

River Road to Ina Road

<http://www.roadprojects.pima.gov/LaCanada/>



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