



La Cholla Boulevard:
Ruthrauff Road to River Road
Community Advisory Committee Meeting



Community Advisory Committee (CAC)
Tuesday, August 7, 2007, 6 to 7:30 p.m.
Metropolitan Domestic Water Improvement District Board Room

CAC Members Present at Meeting:

- Fred Bass
- Ellen Clark
- Jason Kai
- Ann Girvin
- Norma Metz
- Robert Schwartz
- Ellie Towne

CAC Members Not in Attendance:

- Humbert Arce
- Carol Gawrychowski
- Andy Hernandez
- William Mattausch
- Gretchen Ochoa
- Kaye Swinford
- Ian Stewart
- Edythe Walther
- Juergen Walther

Attending from Project Team:

- Pima County Department of Transportation: Carol Brichta, Rick Ellis, John McManus, Dean Papajohn
- HDR Engineering: Larry Barela, Ted Buell, Scott Stapp, René Tanner
- Gordley Design Group: Barb Alley, Jan Gordley, Arizeder Urreiztieta

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- Fact Sheet
- Binder for CAC members
 - Welcome Letter
 - Project Features
 - Project Area Maps
 - Pima County Community Participation and Mitigation Ordinance

Dean Papajohn, Pima County Department of Transportation (PCDOT) Project Manager, welcomed the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) members to their first meeting. Dean mentioned that there would be presentations from Rick Ellis, PCDOT Engineering Division Manager; Ted Buell, HDR Engineering Project Manager and René Tanner, HDR Engineering Project Scientist. Dean spent a few

minutes introducing himself to the group and what his role would be throughout this project. All of the project team members then introduced themselves and the committee members followed suit.

Dean began his portion of the presentation by telling the members that the essence of this project will be to “enhance life for people in Pima County.” Dean stated that roads build community and by community he meant getting to homes, schools, hospitals, shopping, friends, family and work. The CAC meetings are intended to analyze and discuss issues throughout the project and for the members to not only be the eyes and ears for the community, but to also educate those located in the project area to become more informed citizens.

Dean stated that the agenda for the meeting consisted of introductions, a brief presentation on how a CAC operates, an overview of the project, and receiving comments from the members.

Dean introduced Rick Ellis, PCDOT Engineering Division Manager. Rick started out thanking the members for their commitment to this project. He stated there would be a lot of work and a lot of value with some key elements to come. Rick said there are three roles for the CAC on this project and wanted the members to know what to expect. First of all, the project team would be looking for feedback, real-life observations, and would be hearing from the CAC members about what is going on out in the community affected by the project. Secondly, the members were chosen because of the different interests they represent, from homeowners to business owners to community groups, and the project team would be looking for those perspectives. And third, Rick said this group needed to be advocates – allies to the project out in the community. He reiterated Dean’s comment regarding educating the public and portraying a positive attitude.

Rick turned the floor back to Dean who introduced Carol Brichta, from PCDOT Community Relations. Carol gave a brief overview of what the CAC members would be responsible for during their time on the committee. Carol first went over what each member would find in his or her notebook. She went on to explain: 1) Each member needs to provide Pima County with feedback from the community; 2) CAC members would be responsible for preparing a collaborative letter hopefully of acceptance of the project that will accompany an Environmental Assessment and Mitigation Report (EAMR) to the Board of Supervisors for approval; 3) Carol referenced the Pima County Participation and Mitigation Ordinance that was in each member’s notebook. She stated that each member should take time to read through this document so that they would fully understand his or her role as a part of this committee. Carol also wanted the members to know that they would also have the opportunity to comment on the artwork that would be a part of the project.

Carol described how each member was chosen. People within the project area were mailed an application. A notice was also in the newspaper. From the signed applications, Dean and Carol plotted each applicant on a map, and then members were chosen in a way that assured that different areas of the project would be represented.

Carol said that it was important that all CAC members read page eight of the Ordinance. This page outlines what the CAC members are responsible to cover during their time on the committee. Carol also stated that although only eight meetings will be scheduled, there would be the possibility of the group meeting on their own when necessary. She also said that it was important for the group to choose a chairperson or co-chairpersons for this committee. It will become more important when the members start to write the letter that will go to the Board of Supervisors.

Carol stated that the next CAC meeting would be in about a month. The CAC members and the public would be notified about the date, time and place when that information becomes available. The suggestion was made that future meetings be held at the new Community Center that will open September 15, 2007. It is closer to the project area and one CAC member thought there might be more community involvement if the meetings were in a more central location.

Carol concluded by emphasizing how community outreach is extremely important to this project.

A question was asked about how soon the meeting summary would be ready to review. Barb Alley, Public Involvement Coordinator for Gordley Design Group, stated that she would start putting them together and they should be up and on the Web site in approximately two weeks. Carol also stated that the Web site was on the bookmark included in their binders. The members would be able to view not only information on this project, but they could get information on all Pima County projects.

A member asked how to give information out to neighbors. Carol stated that the member could make copies of what was passed out at the meetings to distribute or to point residents to the County Web site, which will have additional information for interested parties.

Dean introduced Ted Buell, Project Manager for HDR Engineering, to start the PowerPoint presentation that would take the members down La Cholla Boulevard for a project overview.

Ted started out by informing the group that La Cholla Boulevard between Ruthrauff Road and River Road would be widened from the two existing lanes to six lanes. Other project features:

- Total length of the project will be 1 1/2 miles with .7 of those miles being on La Cholla Boulevard and the rest would be intersection work at Ruthrauff Road and Curtis Road
- Bike lanes (6 feet wide), also referred to as “multiuse lanes”
- Close coordination with Sun Tran regarding the bus stops in the project area
- Drainage issues will be addressed at the Rillito River
- Storm drains will be addressed where La Cholla Boulevard meets the Rillito River (built in 1984)
- Ponding problems will be addressed

Dean spoke on available right-of-way (ROW) on La Cholla Boulevard. There is a 150-foot ROW; 75 feet on each side of the center line of the street. There is a mixture of residential and commercial properties in the area and the goal of the project is to make sure there is safe access into and out of these areas. Dean also touched on the fact that there will be landscaping in the project area. The decisions on what type of landscaping that would be needed would have to wait until it is decided on how the configuration of the roadway will unfold.

Dean also discussed utilities. He asked the group what utilities they thought were in the project area. Dean furthered the discussion by stating that multiple utilities were in the area; sewer, electric, gas, water, cable, etc. Dean also told the group that there is a gas regulator station in the area. Ideally, this should not be a problem, but if it should become an issue, Southwest Gas can only work on one regulator station at a time, and they are currently working on a station in Marana. The next one is scheduled for an area south of the project in Tucson. If work needed to be done on this station, Southwest Gas’ schedule would have to be accommodated. Again, this is not anticipated work at this time, although it could become an issue in the future.

Ted introduced René Tanner, Environmental Planner for HDR, to give a short report on the status of the environmental findings. René stated that one of the tasks of the CAC members would be to review cultural resources as a part of the EAMR. During the research of the project area, there were two cultural sites identified. The next step would be to determine if those sites were within the project limits. Desert Archeology will be surveying the property in order to make that determination for the project team and advise them accordingly. They will also be looking at biological resources, endangered species and wildlife. René informed the group that no bats were located under the bridge, as the current structure was not built in a way so as to support bat colonies. There were swallow nests found, but they were not active and they were deteriorating; however, they will continue to be monitored.

René also told the CAC members that there were a couple of old landfills in the area. They were currently looking at historic photos and documents to see what the limits are, and that would take some further investigation. There would also be soil testing done at the intersection of Ruthrauff Road and La Cholla Boulevard since there are some gas stations in the area. Noise level is another area that will be monitored and studied. The monitors used by HDR Engineering are calibrated each year to ensure their accuracy. HDR Engineering uses the Traffic Noise Model, which was developed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), to assess levels of noise in an area.

Ted talked about the Rillito River Bridge. This bridge was built in 1980 and is a four-span bridge. The design of bridges was changed in 1983 to include drill shaft foundations, which are deeper and more robust. Ted showed a rendering of what the bridge may look like. It would have three lanes in each direction along with a sidewalk and bike lanes on both sides. Ted also mentioned that it is possible to build the bridge one side at a time so that the bridge would remain open to traffic during construction.

Dean took a few minutes to talk to the members about the public art that will be present along the project area. The ideas are wide open at this point and there is nothing to present to the group today. An invitation was sent to members of the Tucson Pima Arts Council (TPAC), to apply for the artist position on this project, and the team received more than 60 applications. The list was cut to three finalists by a panel of citizens in which CAC member Ellie Towne was a part of. The person chosen was Vicki Scuri. Vicki had done other art along La Cholla Boulevard, but she was chosen because of the variety of experience she has in this area and professionalism she would bring to this project. Vicki would have one percent of the total budget of design and construction per Pima County policy to use for her art projects. Dean mentioned some areas that may include art along the project area; the bridge itself, the Rillito Park entrance, sidewalks, bus stops, etc.

Dean again mentioned the ongoing data collection and activities that have already begun on this project. Aerial photos have been taken of La Cholla Boulevard in its current state. There have also already been survey crews taking a look at the utilities and checking records. Pima County's Real Property division has already contacted residents and businesses with Right of Entry letters so that surveys could be made. Traffic engineers are already surveying the traffic flow and the noise levels will be measured once school is back in session.

Dean concluded the presentation portion of the meeting by stating that the design phase of this project will take a minimum of two years. It takes time to look at and resolve all the issues that will arise during the planning stage of the widening project improving La Cholla Boulevard between Ruthrauff Road and River Road. He pointed out that in the early fall of 2007 the team should have the Design Concept Report (DCR) and the EAMR ready for the CAC members to review. Once the committee reviews those documents, they will go to the Board of Supervisors for approval and upon approval the team can then go into the design phase of the project.

The floor at that time was opened up to questions and comments:

Ellie Towne: Concern about heading south on La Cholla Boulevard and making a right-hand turn onto Curtis Road; when vehicles are in the right-hand turn lane, there will be some cars that will go around them to turn in front of them: Dean said that traffic engineers are studying intersections and any problems they currently are experiencing.

Fred Bass: Concern about how close the new road will come to the houses in that area; also a concern about the safety of the middle-school kids who walk to and from school; cars do not always yield to the children, and often speed in the school zone. Dean reiterated that the traffic engineers would be surveying that area. One suggestion was that a median be put at the school crossing so that kids would have a place to stop if unable to make it all way across the new lanes on La Cholla Boulevard.

Jason Kai: Concern about how to access homes that are in the path of the widening project. He stated that on La Cañada Drive, those residents were given access to their homes from a street behind the main street. Dean talked about some of the options of what the widening may look like from narrowing the median to only putting a sidewalk on one side of the street. There are many alternatives to look at during this design phase to come up with the best one that would meet the needs of everyone involved. This may involve acquiring properties, building a frontage road for safe home and business access, etc.

Norma Metz: Concern about her home specifically. She is on the corner of La Cholla Boulevard and Curtis Road. Her concern was the amount of property the County would have to take in order to widen this stretch of road, leaving her home dangerously close to the busy intersection. She also referred to how difficult it was for her to get to and from her home turning from La Cholla Boulevard in a safe manner. Dean commented about how wide the intersection would be once four more lanes and turn lanes were added.

Robert Schwartz: Concerns about drainage problems. He has major problems on his own property on La Cholla Boulevard north of River Road with the vertical road profile that the County contractor did not build according to the plans has caused major issues on his own property. Dean said that that side of the road would have to be examined to determine what occurred.

Jason Kai: Concern about the additional three lanes in each direction causing back-ups due to the trains crossing Ruthrauff Road. Dean said the County is aware of the bottleneck in that area and they are taking the improvements one step at a time. Ruthrauff Road is on the long-range plan for improvements as well.

There was some discussion about how property might be acquired along the project area. It was stated that different options would be investigated, and the county would make sure if they needed to purchase property, it would be a fair transaction for all parties involved.

Dean adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m. letting the group know that the team would honor and respect the time of the group. He concluded with the opening statement: that the goal of this project is to: “enhance life for the people in Pima County.”