



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



Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting
Thursday, Aug. 12, 2008
6 to 7:30 p.m.
Ellie Towne Flowing Wells Community Center

CAC Members Present:

- Fred Bass
- Ann Girvin
- Norma Metz
- Wayne Metz
- Robert Schwartz
- Ellie Towne

CAC Members Not in Attendance:

- Ellen Currey
- Carol Gawrychowski
- Andy Hernandez
- Jason Kai
- William Mattausch
- Gretchen Ochoa
- Ian Stewart
- Kaye Swinford

Attending from Project Team:

- Pima County Department of Transportation (PCDOT): Carol Brichta, Rick Ellis, Dean Papajohn
- Representative from Supervisor Sharon Bronson's office: Kiki Navarro
- HDR Engineering: Larry Barela, Catherine Bolm, Bob Brittain, Ted Buell, Scott Stapp
- Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) – Jim DeGrood
- Gordley Design Group: Barb Alley, Arizeder Urreiztieta

Attending from the Public:

- Bonny Bass
- Timothy Barrett
- Marvin Horn
- Bob Iannarino
- Jerry Jones

Materials Distributed/Presented:

- Agenda
- Comment forms
- RTA booklets
- Draft Environmental Assessment and Mitigation Report and Draft Design Concept Report

Dean Papajohn, PCDOT Project Manager, welcomed the group to the CAC meeting, and again thanked the members for their commitment to the La Cholla Boulevard project. He took a moment to go around the room and have everyone introduce themselves and state their affiliation.

The purpose of tonight's meeting is to discuss two very important project documents. The CAC will be provided with the draft Design Concept Report (DCR) and the draft Environmental Assessment and Mitigation Report (EAMR). Although the DCR is in draft form, it is quite thorough at this stage and it includes all the documentation that has been presented to the CAC members over the past several months. The draft EAMR contains all the information to date and it summarizes all the investigations, analysis and design work that has been completed for this project.

With the amount of information in the reports, the team felt it would be beneficial to the members to present them with the documents in order to help them navigate through some of the major elements in the documents. It will be the role of the CAC members to respond to the DCR and the EAMR, and present that information back to the design team.

Dean took a moment to direct the CAC to the Community Participation and Mitigation Ordinance, section 10.56.200, which is located in their member notebooks. He stated that this section spells out the functions and the duties of the CAC. At this point in the process, the CAC is to provide written comments containing the CAC's recommendations on the DCR and the EAMR. The written summary and response will not only be presented to the design team, but will also be presented to the Pima County Board of Supervisors (BOS).

The CAC members on this project are further in the process than other CAC's; they had written a letter to the BOS in January. Dean stated that the team did their best to incorporate their concerns in the documents that the committee had received.

Dean stated that the group would need to come together after reviewing the documents in order to write their letter. He stated that PCDOT would be available to meet with the members if requested. Dean stated that the committee could use the comments that they submitted to the BOS in January, or they could write a new letter.

Dean informed the members that as a part of the process, the team would be getting the additional input from the community at a public meeting that has been scheduled for Sept. 11, 2008, at the Ellie Towne Flowing Wells Community Center from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. The county will mail invitations to everyone that lives within one-half mile of the project area. The team will be there with displays and available to answer questions from the public. There will also be surveys that will be passed out to the attendees of the meeting as well as mailed to all who received the invitation for the public meeting. The results will be gathered and given to the project team and the CAC members so they can address the public's comments in their letter to the BOS.

Dean introduced Bob Brittain, HDR Engineering, who would present the draft DCR to the CAC members. The DCR is the report that is drafted to document the design approach on how to prepare the construction plans. This report summarizes all the reports, surveys, etc. that have been performed in the project area. Bob pointed out that at the front of the draft DCR there would be an Executive Summary and a Table of Contents. The following is a quick overview of each chapter:

Chapter 1 – Project Overview – how and why this project exists

Chapter 2 – Project Description – scope of work

Chapter 3 – Project Area Characteristics – existing conditions; environmental and physical

Chapter 4 – Traffic and Accident Data – summarizes traffic volumes, capacity, accidents, etc.

The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) did a safety study of the intersection of La Cholla Boulevard and River Road due to the number of accidents at that intersection. Even though that intersection is not a part of this RTA project, there will be some improvements under the recommendation of ADOT that will occur as a result of that study.

Chapter 5 – Design Standards and Criteria – 2003 Pima County Roadway Design Manual and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)

Chapter 6 – Major Design Features – horizontal and vertical alignment, access control, right-of-way, drainage, earthwork considerations, intersections, utilities, structures, pavement design, signaling, construction issues, design exceptions

Chapter 7 – Social, Economic and Environmental Considerations – summarizes all environmental studies

Chapter 8 – Public Involvement – includes the Public Participation Plan, information from the CAC and summarizes public open houses; documentation including meeting minutes, can be found in Appendix B; information and documentation from the Sept. 11, 2008, open house will be added to this document

Chapter 9 – Agency Coordination – environmental review and intergovernmental agreements

Chapter 10 – Alternatives – lists Roadway Alternatives A, B, C, D, E (recommended by PCDOT), F and variations of Alternative E

Chapter 11 – Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter 12 – Cost Estimate and Budget Considerations

Chapter 13 – References

Appendix A – Construction Costs and Estimate

Appendix B – Community Advisory Committee and Public Involvement Information

Appendix C – Stage 1 (15%) Construction Plans – bound separately

Appendix D – Right-of-Way Requirement Plans – bound separately

There were several questions from the CAC regarding the DCR as follows:

Where will the money come from to improve the La Cholla Boulevard and River Road intersections?

The River Road intersection is a separate project with a separate budget. The County has allocated money separate from the La Cholla Boulevard project to build the River Road intersection improvements.

Where will the money come from for the installation of the new drainage improvements along this corridor?

The project cost estimate has included the additional storm drain since early planning and design identified this as a need.

Was the cost of sound walls added into the cost estimate?

Yes. When the noise study found walls to be warranted, the cost became a part of the estimate.

When will the CAC need to write the letter to the BOS?

After the open house comments are received and documented. The summary of comments will be made available to the CAC prior to writing the letter to the BOS. The public has two weeks after the open house to return comments to be included in the EAMR.

What about the alternative that the CAC is going to recommend?

Dean stated that the team had brought both alignments with them to the meeting tonight. PCDOT is aware that the CAC wants to choose an option that is not being recommended by the County. Dean said that all of the alternatives are summarized in the draft DCR, but the County will only develop one set of plans. It is not cost-effective to design several roadway alternatives. At the 15-percent stage of plans, since the alternatives are not dramatically different, the team is able to show the CAC's alignment choice conceptually. However, further along in the process, it will not be feasible to continue to develop multiple alternatives in detail.

In Alternative B, how far would the road have to be moved over?

Bob stated that the lanes would be wider with Alternative B and he would most likely move the road over 40 feet. With Alternatives A and B, that would allow for wider lanes and a much wider frontage road since property would be purchased in those alternatives. In Alternative D, that alternative would be purchasing both sides of La Cholla Boulevard, reducing the need for frontage roads along the project corridor. This alternative would also keep the roadway on its current centerline.

Dean let the members know that on Page 60 of the draft DCR, there was a cost estimate of the different alternatives. Construction costs for Alternative B would be approximately \$23.8 million in comparison to Alternative D, which would be an approximate cost of \$23.5 million.

Would the CAC's alternatives be presented at the open house?

PCDOT plans to bring the county's recommended Alternative E to the open house. The team will also bring the CAC's alternative they will be recommending; however, they will not bring all of the alternatives to the public meeting.

How will south La Cholla Boulevard look with the intersection expanded at Ruthrauff Road and the possibility of La Cholla Boulevard being expanded past Wetmore Road?

After passing through the intersection, the roadway will gradually narrow back to two lanes. There are no plans in the 20-year plan to widen La Cholla Boulevard in that area. The traffic counts collected do not anticipate much growth.

If Alternative D purchases both sides of La Cholla Boulevard, there would not be frontage roads. Would the cost be reduced because frontage roads would not be needed?

No, there would be other costs incurred like wider lanes. Dean referred the members to Page 50 of their draft DCR to see which houses would be purchased and what the roadway would look like. Money is tight on this project and Dean stated that PCDOT already has the right-of-way needed to build Alternative E.

Dean stated that the team still had the EAMR to brief the members on. He said that the EAMR has a lot of the same information, as the DCR and Scott Stapp, HDR Engineering, would be presenting the EAMR to the members.

The EAMR begins with the executive summary. Scott stated that the summary only summarizes the information that is written in the report, so he is strongly urging everyone to read the entire report prior to reading the summary.

After the title page of the EAMR, there will be a table of contents that will outline what is in the report. The actual report begins on page one, after the executive summary. For your reference, the executive summary portion has ES before each page number.

Scott again stated that the draft EAMR has most of the same information as the draft DCR. This EAMR contains:

Chapter 1 – Background – project cost and funding, direction by BOS, and project design process

Chapter 2 – Purpose and Need

Chapter 3 – Project Setting

Chapter 4 – Proposed Project

Chapter 5 – Environmental Screening

Chapter 6 – Environmental Assessment and Mitigation – Natural/Physical Environment; biological resources, drainage and clean water act, floodplain, air quality, noise, utilities, hazardous materials, construction activities, cultural resources, visual resources; and Neighborhood/Social Environment; right-of-way acquisition, temporary and permanent access and parking impacts, neighborhood disruption, parks and recreational areas, consistency with other plans

Chapter 7 – Agency Coordination

Chapter 8 – Public Participation – public participation activities; community comments

Chapter 9 – Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter 10 – References

Chapter 11 – Abbreviations and Acronyms

Scott told members to refer to Chapter 10 in order to get information on the documentation used in this report. He referred members to Chapter 11 for a list of acronyms that will be used throughout the documents. He also pointed members to the inside cover of their booklets where a CD is located that includes all the text and appendices in the document.

Scott referred everyone to table ES – 7, which is the summary for the environmental impacts and recommendations. He stated that in the summary it would show potential impacts, recommended mitigation, agency coordination and consultation and parties responsible for implementation. Scott mentioned that there were cultural sites found and the design of the roadway was slightly altered to avoid the sites. These sites will continue to be monitored during the course of construction. There was also a lot of past discussion regarding traffic noise. The entire study is contained in this report and what areas were found to warrant sound barriers as a result of the noise study. Another area of concern was hazardous material. Because of the potential of hazardous material from prior businesses, trenches were dug along the corridor and soil samples were gathered. The area was found to be free of any hazardous material. Borings were also done where known storage tanks were located once known to have been leaking. No concerns were noted with the extensive investigations that took place as a part of this report.

Scott took a moment to explain to everyone how to read the main report. He asked the members to turn to Page 18 of their report. Under Section 6.1.1, the CAC would find the Biological Resources section of the report. Under this section the members will find the existing conditions, what permits are needed, potential impacts and mitigation measures. Each chapter has this information available along with additional supporting documentation as warranted.

This report was based on Alternative E. Scott stated that some of this information would change if another alternative were to be chosen. For example, if the design moves out of the existing right-of-way, there may need to be additional contamination testing done to ensure the area is safe to work in.

There were several questions from the CAC regarding the EAMR as follows:

Where are the cultural sites located that were mentioned?

That information is excluded from the public record to ensure the areas stay undisturbed.

I was under the understanding that there were not any sites located in this project area?

There are no cultural resources within the project site; however, there are some sites that are adjacent to the project area that will be monitored.

Dean took a moment to point everyone to Pages ES – 12 and 13. This section contains a summary of the CAC and public concerns within the project area. More detail on this subject could be found in the main document beginning on Page 67.

There is also information in the Appendix on public art. Ellie Towne, CAC member, was on the selection committee to choose the artist that will work on this project. Vicki Scuri from Seattle Wash. was chosen as the artist on this project. There is not a lot of information at this point. She has some preliminary concepts she is working on. When the project is further along, she will come to Tucson and meet with the CAC to discuss her ideas on the public art that will be along La Cholla Boulevard. She is currently exploring art on the railing of the bridge and noise barrier walls. She will want the input from the committee when she is ready to move forward in her designs.

Will she be aware of all the safety features that will be a part of this project?

Yes, she will have all the necessary information when it is time to move forward.

Are there noise walls needed for Alternative D?

Noise walls will not be needed with Alternative D because both sides of the roadway would be purchased eliminating the need for sound mitigation. Dean stated that Scott would be available for any noise questions.

What if some residents don't want walls where walls are warranted?

If noise walls are still warranted upon approval from the BOS, there is a process the team will go through to find out who wants the walls in the areas where noise walls could be added. There has to be a majority of approval for each wall in order for the wall to be constructed.

Are all the documents in this report specific to Alternative E?

All the alternatives are presented in this report. PCDOT's recommendation is Alternative E, which stays within the current right of way, meets the mandates of the County and disrupts as few residents in the area as possible.

Dean stated that since there were no further questions, he wanted to remind everyone of the public open house which would be held on Thursday, Sept. 11, 2008, from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at the Ellie Towne Flowing Wells Community Center.

Dean reminded the CAC that their responsibility would include reading through the documents to get prepared to write their letter to the BOS. Dean stated that it would be up to the CAC if they wanted to use the letter that the CAC sent to the BOS in January; however, they could write a new one if they felt it was necessary. The public has a two-week period after the open house in which comments can be received. Those comments will be given to the CAC for their review. The members should have their letter completed near the end of September.

Dean stated that if there were any individual questions, the team would stay to answer those specific questions.

Can the CAC get a copy of the mailing list? The members would like to send information to the people who received the invitation to the open house.

Carol Brichta, PCDOT Community Relations, stated she would have to check to see if that would be possible. Dean stated that he would like the CAC and PCDOT to work together on any mailing that goes out to the community; it is important the CAC and PCDOT work as a team in this process. Dean

stated the team would be happy to have questions on the survey if the CAC wanted specific concerns addressed with the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.