

**Interstate 8 and Interstate 10 Hidden Valley
Roadway Framework Study**

Chapter 2

Public Involvement Process

August 2009

Prepared for



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2.1 Overview

The MAG project manager served as the key contact person for the Hidden Valley study process. MAG public outreach staff provided guidance and review related to the study's public outreach and communication efforts. The consultant team, led by AECOM, was responsible for maintaining a database of all interested stakeholders; organizing, conducting and documenting stakeholder interviews; preparing for and implementing study forums and workshops; and (with the MAG project manager) making presentations on the study. Presentations involved appropriate audio-visual techniques such as PowerPoint. The goal of the public involvement process was to reach community consensus on a preferred multimodal transportation framework that the MAG Regional Council can accept.

2.2 Public Involvement Plan

Ensuring that a wide range of public and stakeholder involvement opportunities exists on all MAG transportation studies is very important. MAG is dedicated to taking a proactive approach in soliciting citizen and stakeholder comments early and often.

At the outset of the study, a public involvement plan described how the MAG/consultant study team would involve stakeholders and the community in the development of the Hidden Valley regional transportation framework. The plan established strategies for a high-quality program to identify, educate, inform, and engage stakeholders throughout the process.

The public involvement plan explains the steps that the study team will take to ensure citizen and stakeholder involvement throughout the study. The plan seeks to establish a collaborative environment that will promote understanding and useful input. Stakeholders, landowners, and residents must sense that their involvement is genuinely desired and that the time they spend is worthwhile. This is particularly important for attracting very diverse groups and those that may be skeptical or timid about participating. The plan guided the outreach process to meet the study objectives.

An appendix to the final report compiles input received throughout the planning process.

2.3 Involvement Techniques

The outreach process included the following activities:

- Development forums (two)
- Key stakeholder interviews (throughout the study)
- Focus Groups (three)
- Community Workshops (two sets—each held at three locations for a total of six)
- Elected Official Briefings (two rounds)

2.3.1 Development Forums

The team organized and conducted two development forums. The objective of the first development forum, held June 7, 2007 at Central Arizona College, was to understand issues, concerns, opportunities, and current/proposed development projects within the planning area. At the second forum on May 15, 2008, also at the college, the study team obtained ideas and comments on the preliminary draft transportation framework. Each forum was scheduled for approximately two to three hours, allowing ample time for a PowerPoint presentation followed by opportunities to express ideas, comments and criticism. The second forum was conducted on the same day as a workshop for the Pinal County Comprehensive Plan, to ensure close coordination of the two projects.

2.3.2 Individual Stakeholder Meetings and Interviews

To understand issues, development trends and opinions about the future, the team conducted dozens of stakeholder meetings and interviews throughout the study. Team members conducted them and prepared notes of each. These discussions with individuals or small groups identified common themes and divergent viewpoints throughout the study area. They also provided essential input on both short- and long-term development plans, and numerous suggestions for specific changes to network alternatives and the recommended transportation framework. Many stakeholders, including major developers, landowners and their representatives, were interviewed several times as the proposed Buildout transportation system evolved.

2.3.3 Focus Groups

Three focus groups were conducted in Phoenix on January 24, 2008 to obtain specialized input on topics of particular importance. The topics were:

- Environmental interests
- Commercial transportation
- Intergovernmental coordination

Each session brought together an invited group of experts who could offer specialized knowledge key study elements. The groups helped the study team uncover opportunities and constraints affecting the framework of future transportation systems. Team members with extensive experience in facilitation led each discussion.

2.3.4 Community Workshops

Two sets of community workshops solicited input from the entire community on Hidden Valley study issues and network alternatives. The objectives were to inform the public and stakeholders, discuss issues, obtain input on the alternatives and their proposed elements, and solicit additional ideas. Each workshop was held on consecutive evenings at three locations: Casa Grande, Maricopa, and the Goodyear/Mobile area.

Interested stakeholders, developers, landowners, agencies, and citizens were invited to participate in the community workshops. Media releases were distributed to newspapers throughout the study area and information was disseminated through the study web page. Information to encourage participation was sent to cities and counties for inclusion on their websites. The MAG study team prepared handouts, wall displays, comment cards, and a PowerPoint presentation.

Workshop #1: Review existing conditions and identify issues (February 2008)

Workshop #2: Input on the draft framework alternatives (February 2009)

In addition to these workshops, senior members of the study team made themselves available for presentations to special interest groups at their scheduled meetings. As examples, there were multiple presentations to the Transportation Committee of the Pinal Partnership, the Rainbow Valley Citizens' Organization, and groups of property owners and developers.

2.3.5 Briefings of Elected Officials

The MAG study team made presentations to the governing bodies of local jurisdictions and Indian communities, and also met with individual members or committees thereof. Examples of the latter included meetings with the Maricopa County supervisor and the Pinal County supervisor whose districts cover most of the Hidden Valley. Two rounds of formal briefings took place. In the first round, the study team presented the study scope and objectives, solicited input on issues, and obtained ideas for the generalized framework. In the second round, the team presented the recommended framework to ensure a regional consensus.

2.4 Communication Techniques

2.4.1 Stakeholder/Community Database

During the study initiation phase, the study team compiled a database of interested individuals and organizations. A comprehensive list was especially important because of the long-term regional implications of this pioneering planning effort. As more stakeholders were identified during the planning process, they were added to the database and placed on the contact list.

The following is a partial list of stakeholders who were contacted and kept informed:

- ADOT
- Maricopa and Pinal counties (Management, Transportation/Public Works, Planning & Development)
- Flood Control District of Maricopa County
- Indian communities
- All cities and towns in the study area
- Federal Highway Administration
- Arizona State Land Department
- Arizona Game & Fish
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Department of Defense bases and installations
- Utilities serving the study area or with facilities therein
- Irrigation districts and other special districts
- Developers and landowners
- Union Pacific Railroad
- Economic development organizations
- Valley Partnership, Pinal Partnership and other civic organizations
- School districts and other educational institutions (e.g., Central Arizona College)
- Other special districts
- Homeowners associations and other interested citizens groups

2.4.2 Newsletters

The MAG team created a newsletter devoted to the study. Three editions of the newsletter were distributed at strategic points in the process. The purpose of the newsletters was to educate the community about the study, present planning concepts and alternatives under consideration, and promote study-related events. The consultant team created the newsletter and MAG distributed it. MAG posted the newsletters on its website and distributed them both electronically and at the community workshops.

MAG published the first newsletter in January 2008, shortly before the first round of community workshops. The second newsletter in May 2008 was intended to stimulate interest in the second development forum. The final newsletter, issued in February 2009, coincided with the second set of community workshops.

2.4.3 MAG Website

The study team communicated information about the study process and products through a dedicated page on the MAG website. The page was interactive, allowing visitors to ask questions and provide comments, in addition to receiving information on upcoming meeting dates and the status of the study. MAG established a special e-mail address (hiddenvalley@mag.maricopa.gov) for all electronic communications regarding the Hidden Valley study.

2.4.4 Executive Summary Poster

MAG and its consultant created a double-sided, 34" x 44" foldout poster to convey the findings and recommendations of the study to as wide an audience as possible. MAG distributed the poster to the Funding Partners, Study Review Team, MAG member agencies, and a variety of stakeholders that contributed to development of the regional transportation framework. A similar format proved very successful as means of disseminating results of the recently completed I-10 Hassayampa Valley Transportation Framework Study.