

I-10; SR 202L to SR 387 – Wild Horse Pass Corridor Study

Frequently Asked Questions

November 11, 2020

1. Why are you studying this project?

Three major issues have been identified in this corridor that would be addressed by this proposed project. The first issue is that rapid population and employment growth will increase traffic, worsen congestion, and negatively impact travel time and emergency response times. While traffic volumes decreased earlier this year due to the COVID 19 pandemic, they are anticipated to return to pre-pandemic levels soon. I-10 has been especially important because it has been a vital link throughout the pandemic for the movement of essential goods throughout the region, state, and country. It is also important to note that this study uses projected traffic volumes for the year 2040 for the analysis, which are based on long-term growth projections and not temporary conditions like the pandemic.

The second issue is that this segment of I-10 currently has a higher than average crash rate and severity, due in large part to the traffic volumes and resulting congestion. Related factors, such as traffic incidents, construction restrictions, weather events, and other emergencies occasionally force Interstate 10 traffic to divert onto roadways crossing through the Gila River Indian Community.

The third issue is that this corridor is more than 50 years old, and some freeway elements fall short of current design standards or have degraded because of use or age.

The combination of these three issues has resulted in the need to identify improvements that will improve and upgrade the corridor to address these issues.

2. Where can I find more information about the study and the alternatives and options being considered?

You can find more information at the study website at i10wildhorsepasscorridor.com. The “Resources” tab on the website includes the information on the alternatives and options being evaluated (i10wildhorsepasscorridor.com/resources.html).

3. When and how can I make comments on this study?

The public comment period will end on December 4, 2020. Comments can be made through the comment form on the study website (i10wildhorsepasscorridor.com), by email, phone, or mail any time during that comment period. Details are provided on the study website. In addition, a call-in/online public meeting will be held on November 18, 2020, from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. Verbal comments can be made if you call in to this meeting. Written comments also can be submitted during the public meeting if you chose the on-line meeting option.

4. What happens after this public comment period ends?

The study team will gather all comments submitted during the comment period, which concludes on December 4, 2020. The public feedback will be compiled and summarized into a Public Meeting Summary Report, which, when completed, will be shared on the study website.

Public and stakeholder input, as well as engineering, environmental, cost, and right-of-way considerations, will be used to identify the Recommended Build Alternative. The Recommended

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Build Alternative and the No-Build Alternative will both be fully detailed and evaluated in the environmental assessment and the engineering report. Once completed, the draft environmental assessment and engineering report will be made available for public review one last time, culminating in a public hearing, which is expected to occur in late 2021 or early 2022. Following that, either the Recommended Build Alternative or the No-Build Alternative will be selected and the documents finalized.

5. How do I know if my property could be impacted?

The easiest way is to visit the Resources page on the study website at <http://i10wildhorsepasscorridor.com/resources.html> and then open or download the plan exhibit PDF files under the Level 2 information. Identify the parcel(s) you are interested in, and if you see a purple shaded area crossing through it, then your property may be impacted by that alternative or option. It's important to note that if the Recommended Build Alternative is selected, final property impacts would not be identified until the design nears completion.

6. If the Build Alternative is ultimately selected, how will this project be funded?

This proposed project does not currently have all the necessary funding identified to construct all 26 miles of improvements. Proposed improvements to the 6-mile segment within Maricopa County are identified in the Regional Transportation Plan for Maricopa County that is funded, in part, through a dedicated half-cent sales tax for transportation. Efforts are underway to identify potential funding sources for the portion of the project within Pinal County, including federal funds.

7. When would right-of-way/new easements be acquired?

If a build alternative is selected, receives environmental approval, and additional funding is identified, right-of-way and easement acquisition could begin as early as the end of 2022. However, delays in this study process would delay acquisitions. The Arizona Department of Transportation would work with the Gila River Indian Community/Bureau of Indian Affairs and would follow the processes and procedures related to easement acquisition on the Community lands.

8. When would these I-10 improvements be built?

Should the Build Alternative be selected and approved in the environmental document, construction could start as early as 2024 for the northern 6 miles of the corridor between Loop 202 and Riggs Road. For the remainder of the corridor, the construction timeline would depend on identification of the funding source(s).

9. When will the next round of public outreach occur for the I-10 Improvements?

The third and final round of public outreach will be the public hearing, which is expected to take place at the end of 2021 or early 2022. The public hearing will provide the public an opportunity to provide input and comments on the study team's preliminary recommended alternative for the corridor.

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10. How much of an influence does public input have on the selection of an alternative?

Input received during the public outreach process is extremely important. While the study team can evaluate engineering, environmental, right-of-way, and cost factors associated with certain alternatives and options, only the users of the corridor and people who live, work, or have businesses along the corridor can provide insight into the corridor's problems and potential solutions that cannot be otherwise quantified in a technical analysis. Therefore, the public input is considered as important as the technical factors in determining the best solution ultimately selected.

11. If the Build Alternative is selected to widen I-10, how will the freeway traffic change?

During peak travel times, it takes an average of 33 minutes to drive through the 26-mile segment of I-10 today. If no improvements are built, this will increase to 40 minutes by 2040. If the I-10 widening were built, the travel time is projected to be reduced to approximately 32 minutes in 2040, based on the future increased traffic volumes.

12. If a build alternative is selected to widen I-10, how will safety improve?

The addition of a third lane in each direction, in conjunction with wide inside and outside shoulders and improved ramp exits and merges, is expected to reduce congestion, improve emergency response times, and will improve freeway ingress and egress - all causes of crashes in the corridor. Alternative ML3 would retain the existing open median and would not include a new median barrier system; however, Alternative ML2 would add a median barrier system to the corridor, further reducing median crossover-type crashes.

13. I-10 traffic frequently cuts across the Gila River Indian Community, especially if there is an accident or construction on I-10. Will this cut-through traffic be eliminated or reduced if this project is built?

Traffic diverting from I-10 to other roads occurs for many reasons, with accidents and construction being just two of those reasons. Adding one additional lane and widening the inside and outside shoulders on each direction of I-10 would decrease the number of times the freeway would need to be closed or restricted for either accidents or construction.

14. Would this project be built all at once?

While there is a possibility the proposed project could all be built at once if a build alternative is selected, it is unlikely based on the current availability of funding. It is more likely that the project would be built in segments over time as project funding is secured.

15. How long would it take to construct the project?

If a build alternative is selected, the time to construct the project would vary depending on how construction funding is programmed. Under the best-case scenario, the project could be built in approximately three years starting in 2025, but if funding is spread over multiple years, it could take five to 10 years.

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16. What kind of impacts do you anticipate during construction?

If a build alternative is selected, construction impacts would be minimized or avoided to the extent possible but could include narrowed lanes and shoulders on I-10, short term closures or restrictions for I-10, ramps, or crossroads, and construction dust and noise. These impacts would be considered temporary and would only apply during the construction duration.

17. Would construction of this project coincide with the I-10 Broadway Curve Project immediately to the north?

If a build alternative is selected, it is possible that this project's construction schedule may overlap with the I-10 Broadway Curve Project schedule. However, there is no physical overlap between the two projects and any overlap of time is expected to be minimal as the start of this project would occur near the end of the I-10 Broadway Curve Project construction schedule.

18. How much would this project cost?

Because the study has not selected a preferred alternative yet, this is unknown at this time. More detailed cost information will be developed for the public hearing in about a year, but for now, preliminary cost information is available for all the alternatives and options being considered on the Resources page of the study website at:

http://i10wildhorsepasscorridor.com/resources/i-10_202to387_Level3-TechnicalAlternativesScreening_CostandROW.pdf