

CHAPTER 5 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND AGENCY COORDINATION

Public involvement and agency coordination efforts for the Fern Valley Interchange project are intended to ensure that timely and accurate information (such as project activities and solution concepts) is provided to stakeholders, and that sufficient opportunities are available for stakeholder input into the project development process. The alternatives analyzed in this Environmental Assessment are the result of over four years of meetings in the Phoenix community. This chapter includes a description of project teams and participants involved in developing this project, and a summary of the process used to develop the alternatives currently being considered for this project.

5.1 PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

5.1.1 Project Management Team

The Project Management Team (PMT) is responsible for keeping the project moving through the project development process. Their responsibilities include setting up Project Development Team (PDT) and Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings, providing background materials, documenting issues and decisions, responding to public concerns, and helping the PDT and CAC work through problems associated with developing the alternatives. The PMT for the Fern Valley Interchange project consists of the individuals listed in Table 5-1.

TABLE 5-1: FERN VALLEY INTERCHANGE PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM MEMBERS	
Current Members	Position
Dick Leever	ODOT Project Leader
Anna Henson	ODOT Environmental Project Manager
Brian Sheadel	ODOT Roadway Designer
Peter Schuytema	ODOT Transportation Planning and Analysis Unit
Christina Fera-Thomas	ODOT Transportation Planning and Analysis Unit
Gary Leaming	ODOT Project Information
John McDonald	ODOT Region Planner (IAMP)
Nancy Reynolds	URS Consultant Environmental Project Manager
Pat Foley	Rogue Valley Council of Governments, Public Involvement Specialist
Previous Members	Position
Debbie Timms	ODOT Project Leader
John Raasch	ODOT Environmental Project Manager
Jerry Marmon	ODOT Environmental Project Manager
Greg Holthoff	ODOT Environmental Project Manager
Vicki Guarino	Rogue Valley Council of Governments, Public Involvement Specialist
John Morrison	Rogue Valley Council of Governments, Public Involvement Specialist

5.1.2 Project Development Team

The PDT makes final recommendations on the project alternatives; these recommendations are subject to approval by ODOT management and the Federal Highway Administration. Representatives on this team include ODOT, the City of Phoenix, Jackson County and the Rogue Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). An FHWA representative was present at most PDT meetings to provide guidance

PDT membership for this project includes technical experts, such as roadway designers and traffic engineers. Their expertise helped to quickly evaluate the high number of project concepts to identify which alternatives would be technically acceptable. A full technical team of additional designers, traffic and transportation experts, environmental specialists, and public involvement specialists were available to the PDT as their expertise was needed. Current and past PDT membership includes the individuals listed in Table 5-2.

TABLE 5-2: FERN VALLEY INTERCHANGE PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TEAM* MEMBERS	
Members	Representing
Joe Strahl	City of Phoenix
Mike Kuntz	Jackson County
Vicki Guarino	Rogue Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization
Anna Henson	ODOT
Brian Sheadel	ODOT
Peter Schuytema	ODOT
Ad Hoc Member	Representing
Nick Fortey	Federal Highway Administration
Previous Members	Representing
Bruce Sophie	City of Phoenix
Murray LaHue	City of Phoenix
Bob Lewis	City of Phoenix
Denis Murray	City of Phoenix
Stan Bartell	City of Phoenix
Jim Wear	City of Phoenix
Dale Petrsek	Jackson County
Dan Moore	Rogue Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization
Jerry Marmon	ODOT
John Raasch	ODOT

* In the early stages of developing this project, this team was referred to as the Solution Team

The PDT has held 23 meetings (including ten joint PDT/CAC meetings); these began in March 2004, and will continue throughout the life of the project. All PDT meetings were open to the public. PDT meeting minutes are available online at ODOT's website¹ and or upon request upon request from ODOT Region 3, 100 Antelope Road, White City, OR 97503, 541-774-6299.

¹ ODOT's Region 3 website: <http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/REGION3/index.shtml>

All aspects of the project are discussed at PDT meetings, and CAC and public comments are considered. The PDT developed the project's purpose and need, provided technical support to the CAC, managed the alternative development and environmental processes, evaluated alternatives based on the purpose and need and goals and objectives; discussed public and technical concerns raised throughout the process and how these concerns could best be addressed. PDT recommendations to ODOT made throughout the project development process are subject to FHWA approval.

5.1.3 Collaborative Environmental and Transportation Agreement for Streamlining

The Collaborative Environmental and Transportation Agreement for Streamlining (CETAS) group was formed to foster collaboration between participating regulatory agencies in an effort to streamline the environmental process, and to ensure environmental regulations and planning requirements are met. The intent of CETAS is to implement a safe and efficient transportation system as well as meet agency responsibilities for environmental stewardship. CETAS concurrence is requested in the development of transportation projects at several key approval points: purpose and need, evaluation criteria, range of alternatives considered, and selection of the preferred alternative. The following agencies are represented on the CETAS group.

- Oregon Department of Transportation
- Federal Highway Administration
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development
- Oregon Department of State Lands
- Oregon State Historic Preservation Office
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

CETAS has concurred with the project's purpose and need, evaluation criteria, and range of alternatives considered. Their final concurrence will be requested on the Preferred Alternative for this project.

5.1.4 Citizens Advisory Committee

The CAC advises the PDT throughout the EA process. The CAC's role is strictly advisory—and provides a forum for the public to raise concerns and discuss issues to help ODOT develop a project that supports community, as



Citizens Advisory Committee meeting

well as address statewide and regional interests. As indicated above, the PDT makes the final recommendations regarding project alternatives, and FHWA makes the final decisions on the project alternatives. CAC members are volunteers, and represent various community interests such as businesses, property owners, low income populations, freight, bicyclists, pedestrians and neighborhoods. CAC membership changed occasionally due to the lengthy project development process and to adequately represent public concerns. Current and previous CAC members for the Fern Valley Interchange project are listed in Table 5-3. In addition to those listed below, a liaison from Bear Lake Estates attended CAC meetings to help keep residents informed on project actions that could impact that neighborhood.

TABLE 5-3: FERN VALLEY INTERCHANGE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS	
Current Members	Representing
Dack Doggett*	Large Business
Mark Gibson*	Freight / Trucking
Joan Haukom	Neighborhoods, Residents and Minorities
Pauly Hinesly*	Community Leader
Bob Korfhage	Bicycle-Pedestrian
David Lewin*	Neighborhoods, Seniors
David Lowry*	Property Owners
Lenny Neimark*	Developer
Harry Page	Education
Laurel Prairie-Kuntz	City of Phoenix
Madison Taylor	Residents and Low Income
Tani Wouters*	Small Business
Previous Members	Representing
Lee Carrau	City of Phoenix
George Cota	Developer
Terry Helfrich*	City of Phoenix
Mike McKey*	City of Phoenix
Wendie Nichols	Residents and Low Income
Bill Rombach	Small Business
Dan Sauro	Bear Lake Estates, Seniors
* Indicates these CAC members are/were also members for the IAMP CAC	

The CAC held 26 meetings (including ten joint CAC/PDT meetings) to discuss project issues and alternatives, and to provide recommendations to the PDT. All CAC meetings are open to the public, and all were announced in either the local media or online at ODOT's website. The CAC helped develop the goals and objectives for the project to help address community interests (see Chapter 1, Purpose of and Need for Action). The major issues raised through the CAC meetings were similar to those raised through public open house meetings (described below). CAC meeting minutes are available online at

ODOT's Region 3 website² or upon request from ODOT Region 3, 100 Antelope Road, White City, OR 97503, 541-774-6299).

The CAC formed a Bicycle/Pedestrian Subcommittee to address concerns raised about how bicycle and pedestrian facilities would be accommodated with this proposed project. This subcommittee included representatives from the bike/pedestrian community, OR 99 business interests, and the City of Phoenix. The following people volunteered to serve on this subcommittee (their special interest for this committee is provided in parenthesis):

- Bob Korfhage (bike/pedestrian)
- Chris Haynes (bike/pedestrian)
- Edgar Hee (bike/pedestrian)
- Craig Anderson (bike/pedestrian)
- Carolyn Bartell (business)
- Pat Folger (business)
- Terry Rombach (business)
- Brian King (business)
- Jim Wear (City of Phoenix)

Two Bike/Pedestrian Subcommittee meetings were held, primarily to discuss the roadway cross-section on OR 99 and the potential impacts to businesses if wider bike lanes and sidewalks were provided. The initial project designs for OR 99 included 6-foot sidewalks and 14-foot outside travel lanes to be shared with bicycles. Two conflicting concerns were the focus of this discussion. While the 14-foot outside shared travel/bike lanes would be adequate for skilled bike riders, they would not be adequate for those with less experience (especially children). However, if the road were widened to include full standard travel lanes, bike lanes and sidewalks, it would result in substantial impacts to adjacent businesses. In response to recommendations by the Bike/Pedestrian Subcommittee, the project teams adjusted the cross-section on OR 99 to provide 11-foot travel lanes, 11-foot turn lanes, 6-foot sidewalks, and 5-foot (striped) shoulder bike lanes.

A CAC subcommittee was also formed to help develop the Interchange Area Management Plan (IAMP). The IAMP subcommittee included most of the CAC members (see Table 5-2), plus Mark Kellenbeck (business owner) and Lisa Sandrock (resident). IAMP CAC Subcommittee membership reflected various community interests (primarily business, property owners and City of Phoenix). The IAMP CAC held six (6) joint meetings with the PDT. Issues raised during these meetings include: accuracy of population projections, future zoning densities, traffic generation, integration with Regional Problem Solving (RPS) planning efforts, lack of updated comprehensive plans, and floodplain restrictions. The IAMP meetings resulted in a list of land use and management actions to protect the function, operations and safety of the interchange. These actions were incorporated into the Build Alternative and must be adopted by the City of Phoenix.

² ODOT's Region 3 website: <http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/REGION3/index.shtml>

5.2 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The PDT sought and considered public comments and concerns throughout the alternative development process. Public issues were raised through various forums: by local representatives on the PDT, through the CAC and public meetings, from ODOT's website, and by various phone calls, letters and emails received from the public. All PDT and CAC meetings were open to the public and opportunities for public comments and questions were provided. The public involvement process, issues raised at PDT and CAC meetings, and a list of issues raised at public meetings are available on ODOT's website³ or upon request (see Interested Parties letter at the front of this document for contact information).

ODOT provided information about the project through newsletters sent to individuals on the project mailing list (which grew to over 560 people interested in receiving information about the project), press releases, ODOT's website, the publication of reports (e.g., technical traffic and environmental reports posted on ODOT's website), and individual contacts.

General project and alternative information was provided through group presentations to the local Chamber of Commerce, the Medford Rotary Club, the Rogue Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization's (RVMPO) Public Advisory Committee and the local Transportation Advocacy Committee (TRADCO).

5.2.1 Public Workshop

A CAC workshop in June 2004 was used to develop initial alternatives. One of the tables at that workshop was specifically provided for members of the public to generate alternative concepts.

The major issues raised through the CAC meetings were similar to those raised through public open house meetings (described below). Several issues were raised by Bear Lake Estates (the Luman Road connection), the Phoenix Hills neighborhood (traffic, noise, air quality, and visual impacts to the neighborhood), and the Phoenix Association of Business and Property Owners (PABPO) (impacts to existing businesses west and east of I-5, and developable property east of I-5).



CAC public workshop, June 2004

³ ODOT's Region 3 website: <http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/REGION3/index.shtml>

5.2.2 Public Open Houses

Three public open house meetings were conducted to provide additional opportunities for public comments on the alternatives being considered for the Fern Valley Interchange project. These activities were advertised in area newspapers; through paid display newspaper advertisements, press releases to media contacts and organizations; and, for critical meetings, newsletter mailings were sent to property owners, interested citizens and organizations announcing the event and describing the project.

Open House #1

The first open house was held in March 30, 2004 at the Phoenix City Council Chambers. About 35 people attended the meeting. The purpose of this open house was to discuss the process involved in developing alternatives that would address the long-term traffic and development needs at the Fern Valley Interchange. Members of the public were encouraged to identify issues of concern and traffic problems they have experienced in the area of the interchange. Issues and suggestions raised by the public included the following:



Open house, March 2004

- There are long traffic delays in peak hours.
- Consider existing businesses in the planning and construction of the interchange.
- Avoid moving interchange ramps closer to neighborhoods.
- Need bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Reduce the dependence on the automobile and single-occupant driver; consider park-and-ride lots or ride share programs.
- Synchronize the traffic signals.
- Fern Valley Road needs more lanes.
- Keep traffic off Cheryl Lane and Rose Street as much as possible because of the high school.
- Left turns are very difficult from 4th Street onto OR 99.
- Move the interchange further east to provide more spacing between the interchange and OR 99.
- The concrete barrier on Fern Valley Road east of I-5 is a problem.
- Turning movements are difficult at N. Phoenix Road; fire trucks can't make the turn. U-turns are also a problem at N. Phoenix Road.
- Add a signal at the Fern Valley Road/S. Phoenix Road intersection.
- Need a right-turn lane only on Pear Tree Lane so trucks going to the truck stop can avoid going on S. Phoenix Road.
- Consider an additional interchange in south Phoenix.

Open House #2

The second open house was held September 1, 2005 at the Phoenix City Hall to obtain public perspectives on four project alternatives. About 108 people (including City of Phoenix elected and appointed officials and members of the CAC and PDT) attended. Comment forms were handed out to everyone as they signed in, and people were asked to fill out the forms during the open house or mail them later. Respondents were also asked to rank each alternative as “acceptable,” “neutral,” or “unacceptable.” A total of 28 comment forms were received. The Single Point Urban Diamond Interchange (SPUI) received the most support. Issues and suggestions raised by the public included:



Open house, September 2005

- Minimize disruption to existing businesses.
- Minimize property impacts.
- Improve traffic flow.
- Provide good truck movement.
- Provide improved access.
- Reduce the complexity and confusion designed into some alternative concepts.
- Retain Fern Valley Road as the major through street.
- Build a noise wall along I-5 at Bear Lake Estates; keep only one approach road to Bear Lake Estates (retain Luman Road in its current location).
- Provide full access to The Shoppes at Exit 24.
- Provide additional information about impacts to Bolz Road.
- Provide signal at Bolz Road.
- Add a turn lane at N. Phoenix Road.
- Move alternatives further away from the Phoenix Hills neighborhood.

Open House #3

On March 1, 2006, an open house meeting was held at Phoenix High School to provide the public an opportunity to review the alternative development process; to see the alternatives that had been considered throughout the process to that point; and to voice their concerns and make suggestions on alternatives they would like to see considered. Technical expertise in design, traffic and environmental areas was



Open house, March 2006

available to provide additional information. More than 100 people attended this meeting. Most of the issues raised by the public at this meeting focused on potential impacts to OR 99 with the SPUI alternative. Comments included:

- Protect commercial and residential property.
- Focus on the simplest and least costly improvements.
- Avoid widening OR 99, with its major impact on adjacent businesses.
- Do not place median on OR 99.
- Reduce impacts by moving the approach to Ray's Market behind the store.
- Provide right-in/right-out access on OR 99 at Bolz Road.
- Reduce speeds through Phoenix to 25 or 30 mph.
- Use the current Fern Valley Road alignment; widen the bridge to four lanes; make small alignment adjustments to N. Phoenix Road.
- Leave existing Bear Creek Bridge in place.
- Improve pedestrian, bike and disabled access to/from Bear Creek Greenway and on OR 99. Keep the Bear Creek Greenway open throughout construction.
- Provide easy access to Pear Tree Lane, Petro, and the Phoenix Hills neighborhood.
- Move N. Phoenix Road away from interchange so freeway headlights do not cause confusion when traveling on N. Phoenix Road.
- Keep access open for Fern Valley Road going east.
- Widen Fern Valley Road to the north on the east side of the interchange.
- Construct an interchange at South Stage Road.

5.2.3 Outreach to the Phoenix Business Community

ODOT personnel met several times with representatives from PABPO to discuss design issues and potential adjustments to alternatives being considered. Issues raised by PABPO helped to resolve several concerns associated with the proposed project:

- The alternative cross-section designs for OR 99 were reduced to minimize impacts to adjacent businesses.
- The use of one-way streets at the west end of Fern Valley Road (westbound) and E. Bolz Road (eastbound) was added to the design concepts to help minimize business impacts.
- East of I-5, additional design adjustments were made to minimize impacts to existing and planned developments.
- Concerns regarding potential development and increased ability to accommodate additional growth were addressed by including the capacity improvements associated with the Crossing Diamond Interchange, which can more efficiently handle existing and future traffic needs.

In response to concerns voiced by Phoenix businesses and citizens, a special project meeting was held on February 15, 2006. This meeting was intended specifically to discuss issues raised by the local business community, which formed the Phoenix Association of Business and Property Owners (PABPO) in opposition to the alternatives under consideration at the time. More than 105 people attended this meeting. The primary concerns identified by PABPO focused on an alternative under consideration at the time. This alternative, which was not advanced, would have had wide cross-sections on OR 99, an 8-lane facility entering Phoenix at the north end of the downtown couplet, and substantial right of way impacts that would have resulted in major changes to the

community of Phoenix. As indicated in the bullets above, these impacts were addressed by the Build Alternative, which received support from PABPO due to reduced impacts to Phoenix.

5.2.4 Outreach to the Phoenix Hills Neighborhood

Currently, traffic to and from the Phoenix Hills neighborhood is routed via Fern Valley Road (designated as a minor collector at the Fern Valley Road/Breckinridge Drive intersection) or S. Phoenix Road (designated as a collector). Traffic circulation within Phoenix Hills is via local roads intended for low volume traffic. Many residents of the Phoenix Hills neighborhood initially identified concerns with any alternative or option located south of Phoenix Hills. Their concerns were raised because these alternatives and options would require traffic traveling to and from the interchange east of I-5 to use Breckinridge Drive or S. Phoenix Road, resulting in the use of these streets as major arterials—and widening to accommodate the increased traffic. The use of Breckinridge Drive for major traffic movements would bisect the neighborhood; the use of S. Phoenix Road would result in increased traffic directly adjacent to the neighborhood. In response, all of the early design concepts that included these traffic movements were dismissed from further consideration. As the project progressed, ODOT continued to meet with the Phoenix Hills neighborhood group to discuss potential design modifications and the alternative selection process. All of the concerns of this neighborhood were addressed by the Build Alternative being considered in this EA. The Build Alternative is located further away from the Phoenix Hills neighborhood and does not require traffic from the interchange to travel in or immediately adjacent to the neighborhood.

5.3 AGENCY COORDINATION

5.3.1 Local and Regional Jurisdictions

The City of Phoenix, Jackson County, and the Rogue Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization were represented by members on the Project Development Team. The City of Phoenix was also represented on the CAC. ODOT met numerous times with the City Council and with individual members of the City Council.

ODOT discussed the proposed project and Build Alternative at workshops with the Jackson County Commissioners. In addition, ODOT met with the Jackson County Planning Department to discuss the proposed project and the potential consistency of the Build Alternative with the Jackson County Comprehensive Plan.

Short updates of the project were also provided by ODOT to the Medford City Council.

5.3.2 State and Federal Agencies

Personnel from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) were invited, and attended many of the PDT and CAC meetings.

The CETAS group, listed above, was formed to foster collaboration between participating agencies in an effort to streamline the environmental process, and to ensure the complexities of environmental regulations and planning requirements are met. The project was formally presented three times to CETAS: to determine if CETAS would like to track the project (February 2004), to obtain concurrence for the purpose and need and alternative evaluation criteria (March 2005), and to obtain support for the range of alternatives to be evaluated in the EA (June 2007). CETAS was informed by FHWA in December 2009 that only one build alternative (the N. Phoenix Thru Build Alternative) would be evaluated in the EA. As the project progresses, CETAS concurrence will also be requested on the preferred alternative to be recommended for FHWA approval.

Copies (either on CD or hard copy) of the EA were sent to all of the jurisdictional agencies shown in Chapter 6 (References, List of Agencies, Organizations and Persons to Whom Copies of the EA Were Sent). Direct contacts were made with many of these agencies in order to obtain technical information. Examples include: sending a farmland conversion impact rating form to the U.S. Department of Agriculture; contacting the State Fire Marshal and Oregon State Police Department to identify safety issues, and obtaining detailed property ownership information from the Jackson County Assessor's Office.

5.4 TRIBAL COORDINATION

This proposed project was discussed at ODOT meetings with the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, Confederated Tribes of Siletz, and the Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua Tribe of Indians. ODOT met with the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde in April, June and December 2006; June and November 2007; and May 2008. ODOT met with the Confederated Tribes of Siletz in November 2005, 2006 and 2007. Neither Tribe indicated concerns regarding the project. ODOT met with the Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua Tribe of Indians in November 2005, May 2006, September 2006, January 2007, and June 2007. The Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua Tribe of Indians deemed this project to be outside their area of interest. All three Tribes will receive copies of clearance documents sent to the State Historic Preservation Office and copies of the final archaeological technical report.

5.5 HEARING AND DECISION PROCESS

Following the release of this document and during the 30-day review period, a formal public hearing/open house will be held at which the public will be invited to express a preference for the Build Alternative or the No-Build Alternative, and to identify any concerns relating to the proposed project. Written comments will be received for 15 days following the hearing. All substantive comments that are received will be evaluated and addressed in the final environmental document. Substantive recommendations may lead to changes in the proposed alternatives and analysis of the environmental consequences. Following review and recommendation of a Preferred Alternative by the PDT, a Recommendation Document will be prepared. This document will identify the alternative recommended by the PDT, and answer questions raised at the public hearing/open house. Following completion of the Recommendation Document, the project will be evaluated to

determine whether a Revised (final) Environmental Assessment will be completed, if a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is applicable, or if preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required. FHWA will then make the final decision on which alternative to advance for the proposed project.

5.6 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The intent of the project development process used for the Fern Valley Interchange is to find a successful solution that can be supported by ODOT, the City of Phoenix, Jackson County, the local community, and the regulatory agencies. The following provides a general description of that process.

One of the first steps taken by the PDT was to develop the purpose and need for the project (see Chapter 1, Purpose of and Need for the Project). Based on the purpose and need, goals and objectives were developed by the PDT and CAC to help address community concerns. Screening and evaluation criteria were developed to use as tools to help assess the alternatives and determine which alternatives should be advanced for further study. Alternative concepts that did not meet the purpose and need reflected in the screening criteria were not advanced for further consideration. Alternative concepts that had other fatal flaws (e.g., major impacts to Exclusive Farm Use zones outside the City's urban growth boundary) were also not advanced.

Initial alternatives were general concepts. The level of design detail developed for each alternative was determined by the level of detail needed to make a decision on whether to forward the alternative in the process. In some cases, this level of design can be at a very conceptual level; in some cases (e.g., determining the cross-section for OR 99), considerable detail and sometimes survey information was required.

The general study area (Area of Potential Impact) was identified. This area was studied at a reconnaissance (baseline) level⁴ to identify the location of potential environmental constraints, social concerns, and economic issues that could impact alternative alignments.

Throughout the project development process, potential alternatives and options were evaluated based on:

- How well they met the project's purpose and need (using the screening criteria listed in Chapter 1, Purpose of and Need for the Project);
- How well they met the project's goals and objectives (using the evaluation criteria listed in Chapter 1, Purpose of and Need for the Project);
- How well they addressed issues of concern that were raised in the process;
- Whether the alignments avoided known environment, social and economic impacts; and

⁴ Reconnaissance reports are conducted very early in the project development process. These reports are normally based on information that can be obtained from databases and other information that are readily available. A site visit may be performed for some subject areas to verify data that have been compiled. Where appropriate, maps are provided to identify known areas to avoid in developing alternatives.

- Whether the alignments could be made to avoid and/or minimize potential environmental, social and economic impacts.

The intent throughout the alternative development process is to try to meet engineering standards, avoid environmental impacts, address regulatory restrictions, and support community interests as much as possible. Early in the process, less information is available for initial alternative concepts that appear to solve the problem; as alternatives are refined, more information becomes available to help evaluate the alternatives. As more information is obtained (including public and agency comments), additional changes to alternative concepts are made. This cycle continues until the alternatives and options are refined to a point that an extensive evaluation of the alternatives occurs in the form of an environmental document. Throughout the process, alternatives are adjusted and improved; therefore, additional minor changes can always be anticipated.

Initially, the PDT, CAC and the general public identified a large number of alternative concepts by placing lines on maps. All of these concepts were evaluated to determine if they appeared to have fatal flaws (e.g., not meeting safety or engineering requirements or not having been deemed acceptable as determined by the design exception process; requiring major commercial or residential displacements; destroying parks; or requiring major excavation of a hillside). The concepts that appeared most feasible evolved into more detailed design refinements; traffic impacts were predicted; local concerns were discussed; and potential social, economic, and environmental impacts were identified. With each feasible alternative concept, the PDT and CAC tried to find ways to improve the concept—based on design concerns, safety, public input, environmental impacts, and its ability to handle traffic and future growth. New alternative concepts or alignment adjustments continued to be generated by the PDT, CAC and the public throughout the process, and those that appeared feasible went through the same evaluation.

Additional information on the alternatives considered during this process, including reasons that alternatives were not advanced is provided in Chapter 2, Project Alternatives.

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