Summary

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

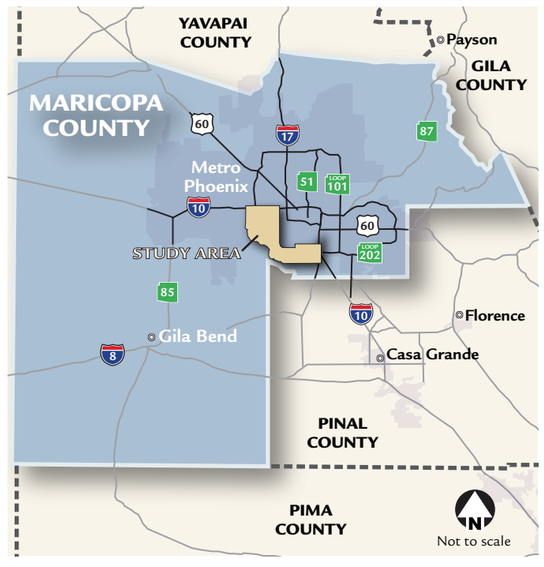
The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) is the sponsor of a proposed action, the construction and operation of the South Mountain Freeway in Maricopa County, Arizona. The proposed freeway would constitute a section of the Regional Freeway and Highway System, the Loop 202 (referred to as State Route [SR] 202L in this document). The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the federal lead agency for the proposed action, in cooperation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Western Area Power Administration, has prepared this Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)/ Section 4(f) Evaluation (referred to as DEIS in this document) in accordance with:

- the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 [42 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 4332(2)(c)]
- Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (49 U.S.C. § 303, as amended)
- Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1977 (33 U.S.C. § 1251)

The DEIS 1) satisfies FHWA and ADOT's environmental analysis requirements; 2) provides a comparison of the social, economic, and environmental impacts that may occur from implementation of the proposed action—operation and construction of a major transportation facility; and 3) identifies measures to avoid, reduce, or otherwise mitigate adverse impacts. The DEIS includes sufficient preliminary design information to compare alternatives.

The location of the Study Area for the proposed action is in the southwestern portion of the Phoenix metropolitan area in Maricopa County, Arizona (Figure S-1). Consideration of alternatives and project impacts was comprehensive and extended outside Study Area limits when appropriate. While the Gila River Indian Community (Community) is included in the Study Area, no alternatives have been studied in detail on Community land. The many years of ongoing outreach to gain permission to study an alternative in detail on Community land have been unsuccessful. Ultimately, the Community elected to not grant permission to study alternatives in detail on Community land and, therefore, FHWA and ADOT have determined that an alternative alignment on Community land is not feasible.

Figure S-1 Location of the Study Area, Maricopa County



The Study Area for the proposed freeway is in the central portion of Maricopa County, Arizona.

The proposed freeway would be constructed in phases ultimately leading to an eight-lane divided, access-controlled facility, with four travel lanes in each direction. Three lanes would be for general purpose use and one lane would be dedicated to high-occupancy vehicle use.

General background information about the proposed action includes:

- The proposed freeway would generally follow the southern and western edges of the city limits of Phoenix, Arizona, for a distance of between 22 and 24 miles.
- The proposed action would constitute a section of SR 202L (part of the Regional Freeway and Highway System). The Red Mountain, Santan, and South Mountain freeway corridors are the component parts of the ultimate SR 202L.
- The proposed freeway is integral to the region's adopted multimodal transportation plan as a key element of the plan's freeway system component and would be part of the National Highway System.
- The proposed freeway would begin at a connection to Interstate 10 (I-10) (Papago Freeway) between

What you will find in the Summary chapter

The *Summary* chapter provides an overview of the proposed action, specifically:

- **what is the historical context (page S-4)**
- **how it came to be needed (page S-5)**
- **what it would look like if it were constructed (page S-8)**
- **the impacts it would cause while being constructed and when open to the public for use (page S-10)**
- **what measures ADOT would implement to reduce those impacts (page S-18)**
- **what events led to identification of a Preferred Alternative (page S-35)**
- **what key issues and outstanding areas of concern are (page S-40)**
- **what communications have occurred in getting to the point of issuing a DEIS (page S-43)**

The *Summary* is not the "final word" about the proposed action; the reader is encouraged to refer to the main contents of the DEIS regarding proposed action-related topics and issues.

Acronyms, abbreviations, glossary, list of preparers, references, and an index can be can be found in the back of the DEIS.

115th Avenue/Avondale Boulevard (milepost 131.7) and 43rd Avenue (milepost 140.7) and end at or near the existing system-to-system freeway interchange connecting SR 202L (Santan Freeway) to I-10 (Maricopa Freeway) (milepost 161.3) (Figure S-2).

CONTENTS OF THE DEIS

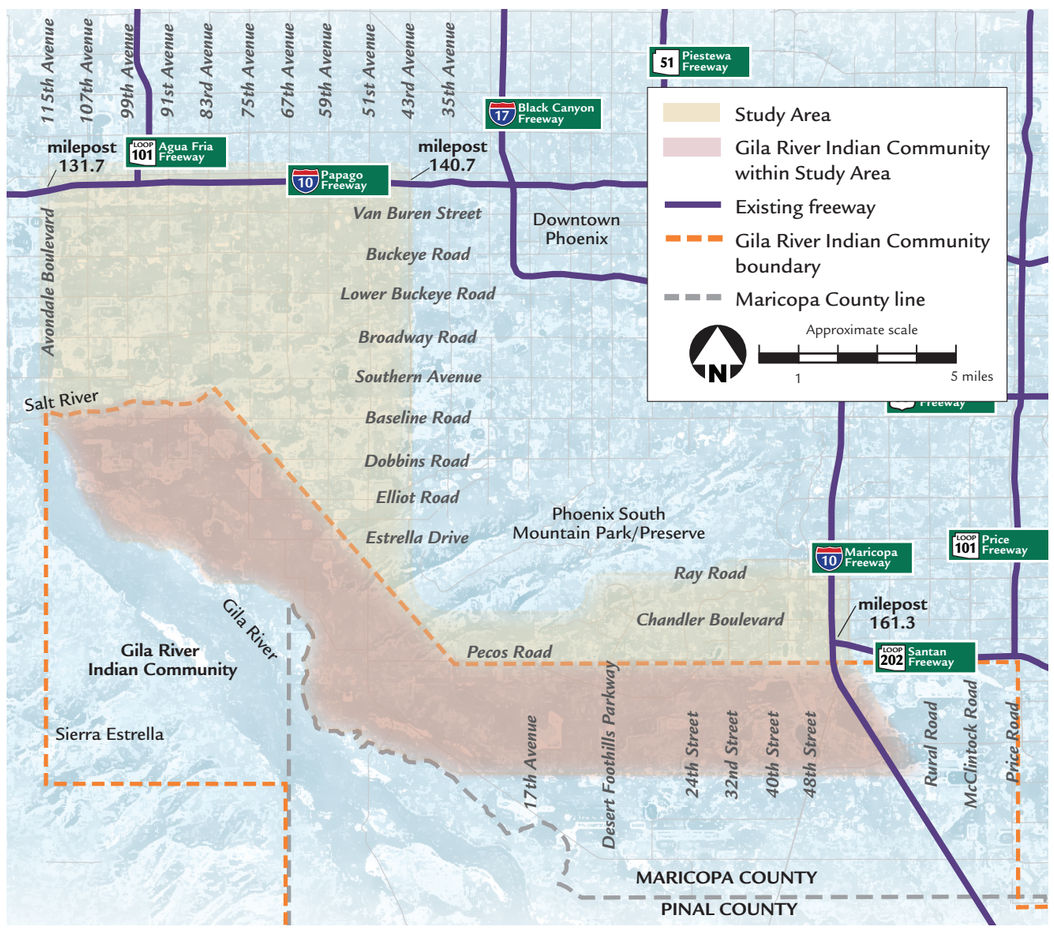
The contents of the DEIS (summarized in Table S-1) embody the first steps of a process through which each step led to refinement and narrowing of previous determinations until a final decision is made. This final decision will be documented in the record of decision (ROD) (see Figure S-3).

COMMENTS ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT PROCESS

The environmental impact statement (EIS) process provides information to assist FHWA and ADOT in making determinations regarding the proposed action to meet project objectives while taking into account sensitive social, economic, and environmental concerns. Basic purposes of the EIS process are to:

- engage the public and stakeholders throughout the process
- provide full and fair disclosure of environmental impacts
- inform decision makers and the public of reasonable alternatives and/or measures to reduce, minimize,

Figure S-2 Location, Phoenix Metropolitan Area



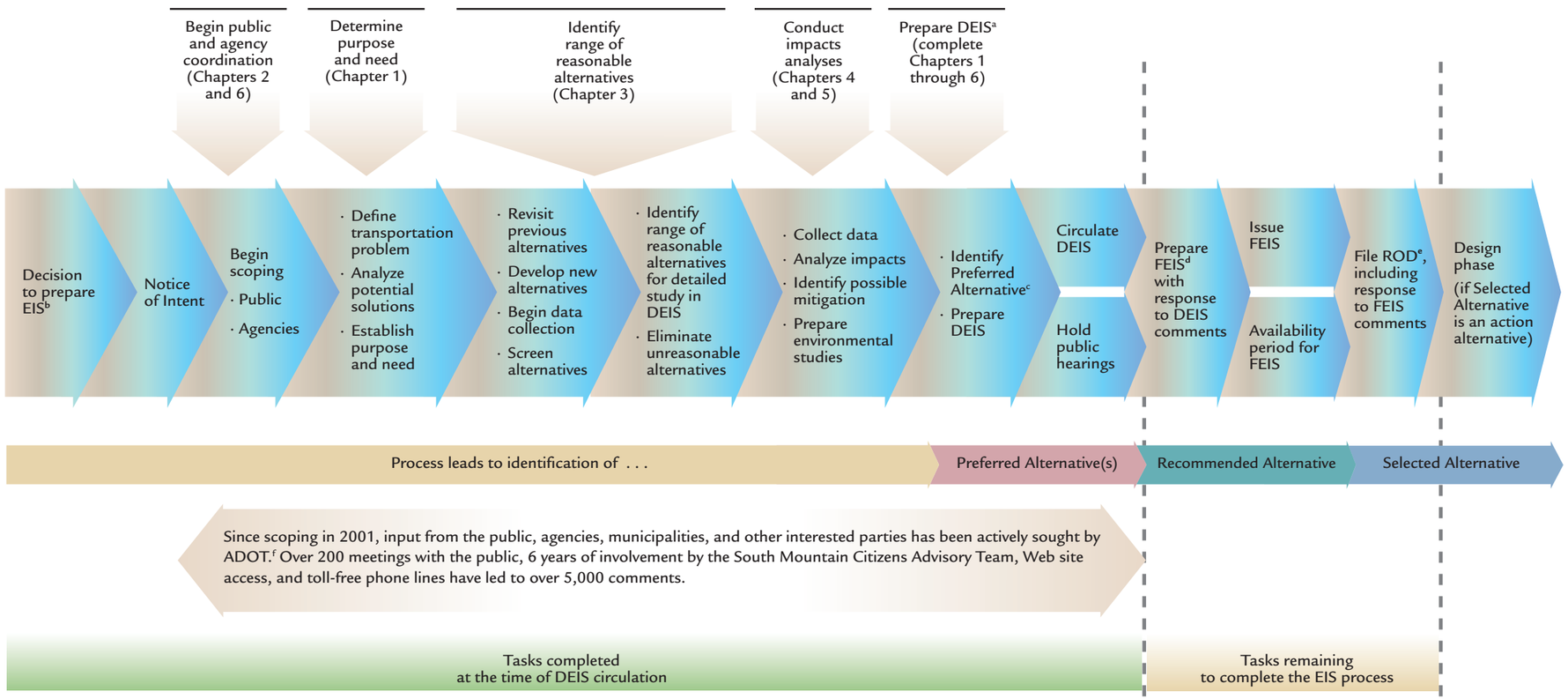
Located in the southwestern portion of the Phoenix metropolitan area, the study of alternative actions encompasses 156 square miles of natural, rural, and urban landscapes.

Table S-1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Section 4(f) Evaluation Content Summary

Chapter	Highlights
Chapter 1 **Purpose and Need**	• Process used to determine whether there is a need for a major transportation facility in the Study Area • Need based on socioeconomic factors • Need based on regional transportation demand and existing and projected transportation system capacity deficiencies
Chapter 2 **Gila River Indian Community Coordination**	• Steps taken by FHWA,[a] ADOT,[b] and others to engage the Gila River Indian Community • Possible future actions that could be taken
Chapter 3 **Alternatives**	• How alternatives were developed and the process used to determine which alternatives should be studied in detail in the DEIS[c] and which should be eliminated from study • A description of the No-Action Alternative and why it is studied • Design features of each action alternative studied in detail, including alignment, profile, number of lanes, conceptual costs, construction sequencing, and how traffic would operate on each alternative in the future • Reasons for Preferred Alternatives
Chapter 4 **Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation**	• Identification of impacts that would result from the action alternatives and the No-Action Alternative • How alternatives may beneficially affect the environment • What measures would be taken to avoid, reduce, or otherwise mitigate adverse impacts
Chapter 5 **Section 4(f) Evaluation**	• The connection of NEPA[d] with Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) • What properties are protected under Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) • How the alternatives would affect resources afforded protection under Section 4(f)
Chapter 6 **Comments and Coordination**	• Awareness of the continuous and comprehensive efforts to engage the public, jurisdictions, agencies, and other stakeholders in the EIS[e] process • Trends in comments received depending on location and time in the EIS process • Future communication efforts that will be undertaken

[a] Federal Highway Administration [b] Arizona Department of Transportation [c] Draft Environmental Impact Statement
[d] National Environmental Policy Act [e] environmental impact statement

Figure S-3 Environmental Impact Statement Process



[a] Draft Environmental Impact Statement [b] environmental impact statement [c] See page S-35 for a discussion of the process for identifying a Preferred Alternative.
[d] Final Environmental Impact Statement [e] record of decision [f] Arizona Department of Transportation

The environmental impact statement process is complete with the filing of a record of decision (ROD). The ROD includes the Selected Alternative, measures to mitigate impacts, and responses to comments received on the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

avoid, or otherwise mitigate adverse impacts or enhance the quality of the human environment to the extent practicable

- consider environmental, operational, fiscal, and engineering factors when making proposed action-related determinations

The DEIS provides planning-level design information to assist in comparing alternatives. The DEIS was prepared, in part, to elicit comments from interested citizens, organizations, and agencies regarding content of the document and the specific effects of the proposed freeway alternatives. ADOT and FHWA have completed the steps leading to the circulation of the DEIS (Figure S-3).

After the DEIS comment period and public hearings, a Final EIS (FEIS) will be prepared and made available. The purposes of the FEIS are to:

- document impacts of the proposed action and to reflect changes (where appropriate, in design, impact, and mitigation disclosure) based on comments received on the DEIS
- describe the process and considerations used to reach a Selected Alternative (to be recorded in a ROD)
- identify and commit to all reasonable mitigation measures that, to the extent practicable, reduce, minimize, or eliminate impacts (formal obligations to mitigation would be expressed in the ROD)
- include comments received during the DEIS comment period and responses to those comments