



US-60/Grand Avenue

Loop 303 to Interstate 10
Engagement Summary

US-60/Grand Avenue Corridor Optimization, Access Management, and System Study (COMPASS)

Loop 303 to Interstate 10

Engagement Summary

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ADOT	Arizona Department of Transportation
COMPASS	Corridor Optimization, Access Management Plan, and System Study
El Mirage	City of El Mirage
Glendale	City of Glendale
I-10	Interstate 10 Papago Freeway
I-17	Interstate 17 Black Canyon Freeway
MAG	Maricopa Association of Governments
Peoria	City of Peoria
Phoenix	City of Phoenix
SR-101L	State Route 101 Loop Agua Fria Freeway
SR-303L	State Route 303 Loop Bob Stump Memorial Parkway
Surprise	City of Surprise
TI	Traffic Interchange
US-60	United States Route 60
Youngtown	Town of Youngtown

1.0 Introduction

The US-60/Grand Avenue COMPASS – Loop 303 to Interstate 10 is being conducted by the Maricopa Association of Governments in order to identify a long-term solution for accommodating travel demand and adjacent property access, establish operating principles to improve the effectiveness of traffic operations, and prepare an Access Management Plan that will provide a detailed milepost-by-milepost description of adjacent property access along the US-60/Grand Avenue corridor.

A Partnering Charter was signed on February 22, 2012, by the political leadership of the communities within the US-60/Grand Avenue COMPASS corridor. The outcomes of this technical study will address the following goals that were identified in the charter:

- Cooperatively create an overall vision for the US-60/Grand Avenue Corridor that embraces the important regional function of Grand Avenue as a significant high capacity, multimodal corridor and that can recognize the unique character of different sections of the corridor and the communities it passes through.
- Cooperatively define the operational character for the US-60/Grand Avenue Corridor that will enhance economic development, maintain accessibility to adjacent land uses, improve traffic operations, and reduce highway and rail conflicts.
- Establish an access management system that provides an efficient means to accommodate intersecting roadways and access to and from adjacent properties. After the system is recommended and agreed upon, each stakeholder will incorporate the principles and recommendations into their transportation, economic development and community development.
- Develop guidelines for signage, landscaping and aesthetic treatments along the corridor recognizing the different communities along the corridor.
- Work together to provide the affected stakeholders, including daily commuters, local residents, and adjacent property owners and users with information about the project and opportunity to contribute to the study's outcome and recommendations.

1.1. Purpose of This Paper

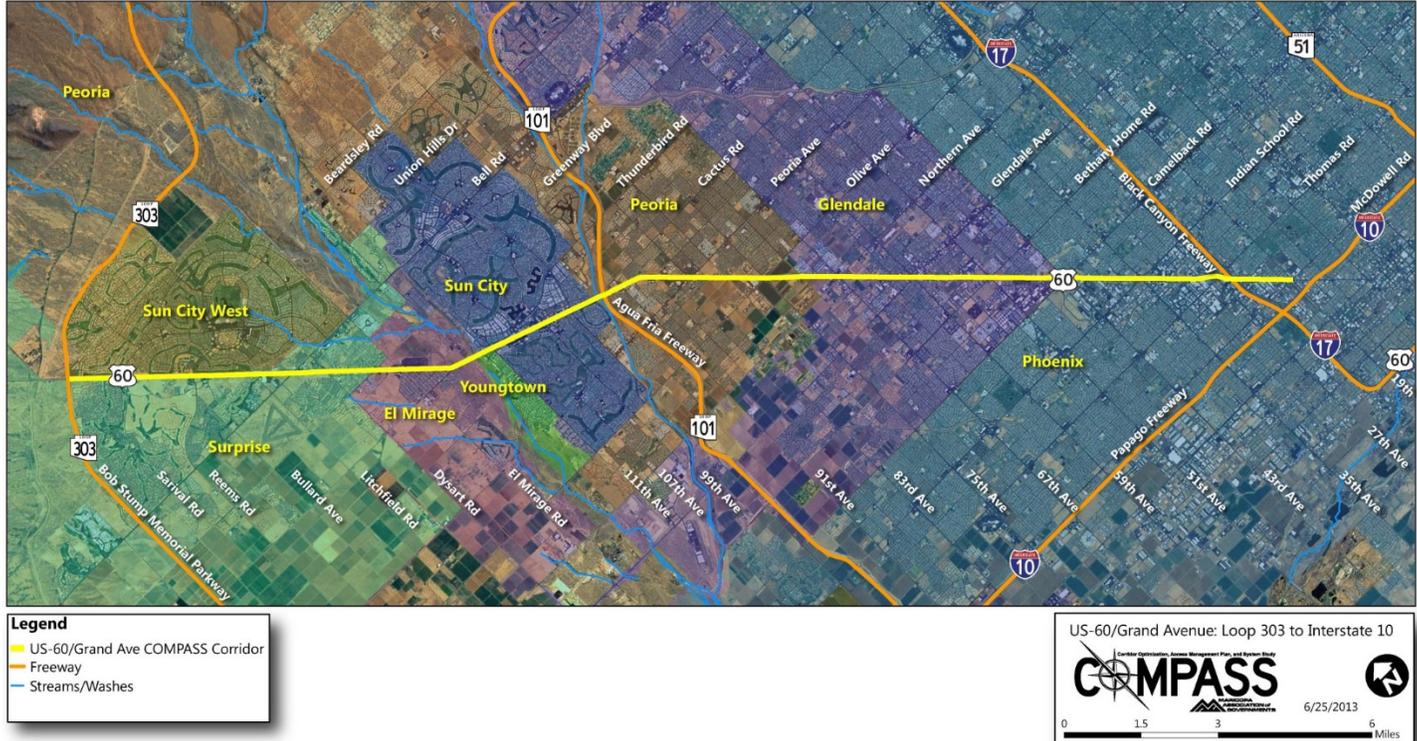
This paper summarizes the engagement effort undertaken during the US-60/Grand Avenue COMPASS project. Meeting summaries are on file and available from MAG.

1.2. Study Area

The US-60/Grand Avenue COMPASS corridor begins at the TI with SR-303L in the City of Surprise, Arizona, at US-60 reference marker 138.051 (expressed in miles) and ends at the Willetta Street intersection in the City of Phoenix, Arizona, at US-60X reference marker 161.880 (expressed in miles). The corridor is oriented northwest-southeast, and passes through portions of the City of Surprise, City of El Mirage, Town of Youngtown, City of Peoria, City of Glendale, City of Phoenix, and unincorporated Maricopa County.

US-60/Grand Avenue is a regionally significant six-lane roadway that is part of the NHS. It serves as a vital link connecting four important regional freeways: I-10, I-17, SR-101L, and SR-303L. US-60/Grand Avenue extends north to the Town of Wickenburg, where it turns west to western Arizona and California. In Wickenburg, US-60/Grand Avenue connects with US-93, which is the primary link to northwestern Arizona and Las Vegas from the Phoenix metropolitan area.

The US-60/Grand Avenue corridor includes the BNSF Railway. The BNSF Railway tracks run the full length of the corridor, parallel and adjacent to the roadway. They are situated along the roadway's southern edge south of Olive Avenue, and the northern edge to the north.



1.3. History of US-60/Grand Avenue*

US-60/Grand Avenue was first envisioned in 1887 by developer and Glendale founder, William J. Murphy. The first 18 miles of roadway connected 7th Avenue and Van Buren Street in Phoenix to the City of Glendale. Within a decade, Mr. Murphy exchanged right-of-way along Grand Avenue for construction of a rail line connecting Phoenix to Prescott, supporting the existing agricultural economy as well as enabling industrial growth. Grand Avenue was first paved in 1919.

In 1926, US-60 was commissioned as one of two transcontinental highways and its earliest Arizona segments included routes from Wickenburg to Phoenix. In 1927, Grand Avenue was approved as the West Valley alignment for US-60. US-60 was quickly established as one of Arizona's most important east-west transportation routes. For many decades, US-60 was the only route through Arizona to Los Angeles until the 1950s, when construction for I-10 would begin to syphon off Los Angeles-bound traffic.



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US-60/Grand Avenue is maintained by ADOT as part of the NHS. While US-60 no longer connects the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, as it terminates in western Arizona, it remains a valuable regional facility serving as the only major roadway connecting the downtown areas of Surprise, Sun City, El Mirage, Youngtown, Peoria, Glendale, and Phoenix. The corridor continues to serve multiple purposes, including local access, commuter travel and freight movement, and is a popular route to Las Vegas for residents from the Phoenix metropolitan area.

***Sources:**

City of Glendale, "Grand Avenue Corridor"; www.glendaleaz.com/planning/GrandAvenueCorridor.cfm (accessed October 21, 2014)
"U.S. Highway 60", Arizona's Historic Roads; https://www.azdot.gov/docs/default-source/historical-roads/us60_highwayhistoryEF602157047A.pdf?sfvrsn=2 (accessed October 21, 2014)

2.0 Engagement Strategy

MAG is dedicated to taking a proactive approach to soliciting community and stakeholder input throughout the preparation of transportation-related studies. The involvement effort is directly linked to the project's technical work to provide review, comment and input throughout the process. In total, the study team facilitated well over 50 meetings with the public, stakeholders, elected officials, and interested parties during the study. Additional briefings and presentations were facilitated throughout the study.

The following describes the engagement strategy, including stakeholder and public engagement, as well as communication tactics used throughout the study.

2.1. Stakeholders

2.1.1. Charter Partners

The Charter Partners group includes the political leadership of the partnering agencies: Surprise, El Mirage, Youngtown, Peoria, Glendale, Phoenix, Arizona Department of Transportation, and MAG. The Charter Partners initiated this study with the signing of a partnering charter in 2012. Over the course of the project, study team members provided updates and received input from the Charter Partners at key milestones.



Study team members attended three Charter Partners meetings during the course of the study.

2.1.2. Management Partners

The Management Partners group consists of the professional management of the partnering agencies (i.e., city manager, town manager). The Management Partners group was engaged at key milestones of the project to present study findings and to inform the iterative nature of this study.

2.1.3. Planning Partners

The Planning Partners group consists of agency representatives that will be responsible for technical review and input throughout the process. Besides attending regular Planning Partners meetings, these agency representatives engaged key individuals and leaders within their agency and provided input on behalf of their agency.



The Planning Partners group was comprised of approximately 35 agency representatives, with varying participation throughout the study. In total, nine meetings were held with the Planning Partners.

2.1.4. Additional Stakeholders

Engagement with interested and impacted stakeholders was essential to the success of this project. Early in the effort, interested public agencies, non-profit organizations and private interest groups were invited to

participate in two topical focus groups. On June 11, 2013, focus groups on business/economic development and rail/freight were held. A total of 28 participants signed into the two focus groups.

Throughout the project, the study team met one-on-one with key landowners and stakeholders as identified by partnering agencies and/or at the request of the entity. These meetings were critical to inform the development of the access management plan and in providing operational observations of the corridor.

2.1.5. Public

While the study was largely a stakeholder-driven effort, at two times during the study public meetings were held to solicit feedback from the community.

The first series of public meetings was held on July 22 and 24, 2013 at the City of Glendale Council Chambers and Communiversity@Surprise, respectfully. The workshops were advertised in local media and invitations sent to the project database. A total of 22 participants signed into the two workshops. The purpose of the two workshops was to provide an opportunity to validate and add to the information that has already been gathered by the study team and to receive feedback on the four corridor concepts. The four corridor concepts emerged from trends identified through stakeholder interviews, Charter and Planning Partner meetings, and technical research conducted to date.

The second series of public meetings were held June 23 and 24, 2014 at the Glendale Main Library Auditorium and Northwest Regional Library – Surprise Branch, respectfully. The workshops were advertised through a MAG-issued press release and invitations sent to the project database via email. A total of 32 participants signed into the two workshops. The purpose of the two open houses was to present study findings, as well as to solicit input on recommended improvements, including access management strategies and traffic interchange options.



2.2. Communication Tactics

2.2.1. Website and Electronic Mediums

Hosted by MAG, a project webpage (us-60compass.azmag.gov) was developed and maintained, serving as an information portal for the study. Public meeting notices and information, as well as meeting summaries, presentations and key documents, were posted online so that interested parties could follow project progress.

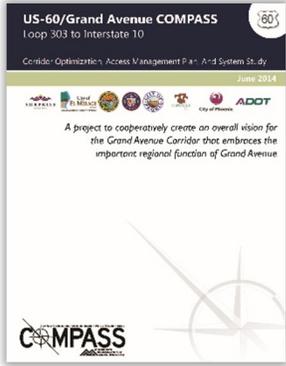


The project database—consisting of over 300 stakeholder, agency and public contacts—was utilized in e-mailed meeting invitations. Leveraging the efficiency of electronic communication, invitations and notifications for focus group meetings, as well as public meetings, was utilized. Pre-event registration was also offered, allowing meeting participants to skip meeting sign-in and immediately participate in the event.

2.2.2. Fact Sheets and Brochures

Informational pieces were developed and distributed as a means to communicate the study and its findings. At project initiation, a study fact sheet was developed outlining the study background and purpose. This fact sheet was posted online and distributed at the first round of meetings.

As the study progressed, a more comprehensive study “folder” was produced, outlining feedback received to date, concepts studied and a conceptual framework; this 11x17” informational piece was folded in half and used as a jacket to contain specific meeting handouts or project information.



2.2.3. Media Releases

Media releases were utilized throughout the study, particularly in advance of public meeting opportunities. At no less than three times during the study, MAG’s communications staff distributed media releases to area press outlets.

3.0 Summary of Input Received

3.1. Project Initiation

At the onset of the project, Charter Partners and Management Partners outlined the following key principles for this project:

- Improve the regional function of the US-60/Grand Avenue Corridor while balancing local needs
- Enhance economic opportunities for growth and redevelopment
- Develop efficient, safe, and cost-conscious transportation solutions
- Incorporate multimodal transportation options

These served to frame the project and inform the development of alternative concepts.

3.2. Concept Development

Based on the initial feedback provided by the Charter Partners, Planning Partners, Management Partners and other stakeholders, the study team developed and subsequently sought input on four corridor concepts. Input was solicited through committee meetings as well as one-on-one discussions with stakeholders. The study team also hosted topical focus groups with business and freight interests and hosted two public workshops, both efforts for purposes of soliciting input on the concepts. Much of the input received emphasized the importance that the facility support economic development and multimodal considerations, particularly related to the potential for redevelopment throughout the corridor. Because US-60/Grand Avenue is a regional mobility asset, stakeholders and the public noted that while corridor improvements should foster economic development along the corridor, solutions must respect the unique history and character of each community the corridor traverses.

3.2.1. Red Concept – Continue Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Improvements

Participants of the rail and freight interests' focus group were quick to point out that the Red Concept alone would not support redevelopment efforts nor assist in really effecting change through the corridor. Specifically, participants of the focus group noted the Red Concept would not support transit-oriented development and the types of economic investment West Valley communities have been focused on generating. While there was support for continuing with programmed improvements, input received from stakeholders and the public indicated those programmed improvements didn't go far enough to fulfilling the long-term vision for this corridor.

3.2.2. Purple Concept – US-60/Grand Avenue Expressway

For those that desired free-flow movement of traffic between key activity centers or community nodes, this alternative was favorable; however, as was noted by participants of the rail and freight interests' focus group and public workshops, if only spot operational improvements would be made, the modest efficiency gains would not justify the considerable investment needed to implement. Further, with communities now desiring a change in the existing development pattern, participants of the rail and freight interests' focus group conjectured this concept would not assist in this endeavor in a meaningful way.

Input received from stakeholders and the public emphasized the desire for an integrated corridor that was able to both connect downtown centers while ensuring pedestrian access and mobility. With public and stakeholders increasing their interest for multimodal solutions, this concept seemed too roadway-focused and not in keeping with the long-term vision of the region. Input received also noted that a high-capacity expressway concept would not best support local economic development efforts, as is a focus amongst the West Valley communities connected by US-60/Grand Avenue.

3.2.3. Blue Concept – Commuter Rail with Operational Improvements

Input regarding the Blue Concept was largely positive. The commuter rail component, in particular, aligned the best with many municipal plans (e.g., El Mirage, Surprise, Peoria) and would offer the best project/concept “phasing” opportunities. However, input from stakeholders and the public acknowledged that in order for this concept to be successful, a robust localized transit system would need to be in place to support it. Some input received wondered if the application of commuter rail along this corridor was viable. Many were pleasantly surprised at the relative cost competitiveness of the Blue Concept.

3.2.4. Green Concept – Other High Capacity Transit

Participants of the business and economic development focus group thought this concept would connect activity centers most effectively, but wondered if the concept would jeopardize other regional assets, such as valuable industrial and freight opportunities that, in some cases, only exist along this specific corridor. They contended that the concept could be further strengthened with a network of transit features coupled with other strategies, such as dedicated commuter lanes or road diet measures. Input also suggested that this concept may not compliment a phased approach for employing multimodal options, and would not be as flexible or adaptable over time.

3.3. Recommendations

In the summer of 2014, the study team held public meeting and met individually with agencies to solicit input on recommended improvements, including access management strategies and traffic interchange options.

Participants of the two public meetings were supportive to applying access management throughout the corridor. Many participants provided feedback on opportunities to beautify the corridor and incorporate signage, landscaping, multimodal aspects (i.e., bicycle accommodations), and other improvements that could establish a unique corridor. While the feedback from the public and agencies assisted in further refining the recommended corridor improvements, the following suggestions largely influenced the study recommendations:

- **Support high capacity transit.** From the beginning of the study, the vision for high capacity transit was emphasized among the public and agencies. Implementation of commuter rail along this corridor is consistent with current general plans for communities in the study area.
- **Consolidate access.** A defining characteristic of this corridor is the large number of access points (driveways and curb cuts). By eliminating access points thus reducing the number of conflict points throughout the corridor, both operation and safety is improved. Agencies have applauded the City of Glendale’s access control efforts and support implementation of access management throughout the corridor.

- **Facilitate grade-separated crossings of the BNSF Railway as much as possible.** By minimizing at-grade railroad crossings of US-60/Grand Avenue crossroads, safety and traffic operations could be improved. This suggestion, along with more detailed traffic information, led to recommending additional new and substantially improved grade separated traffic interchanges in the study area.
- **Facilitate context-sensitive character improvements for Lower Grand Avenue.** Considerable urban design planning and bicycle/pedestrian-friendly improvements have occurred in recent years along this Phoenix commercial strip. Feedback from the public, business owners and the city indicated the importance of maintaining access to and connectivity through US-60/Grand Avenue while complimenting the change in character of the corridor through Lower Grand Avenue.

Ultimately, the concepts that were endorsed through public and stakeholder feedback and accepted by the Charter, Management and Planning partners were:

- Completion of programmed improvements as identified through 2031 (Red Concept).
- Implementation of commuter rail within the BNSF Railway right-of-way along with new operational improvements, including several new or substantially improved grade-separated traffic interchanges (Blue Concept).