

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared in accordance with the provisions and requirements of Chapter 1, Title 23 United States Code (USC), 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 771, relating to the implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and by Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966. This draft EA analyzes and discloses the potential effects on the environment of a new transportation facility to be constructed from State Route (SR) 303L to United States (US) 60 (Grand Avenue) that will be known as the Northern Parkway project. The NEPA process provides an analysis of the effects of the proposed project on the human and natural environment, including examination of alternatives that may serve to avoid or minimize the effects of the proposed project.

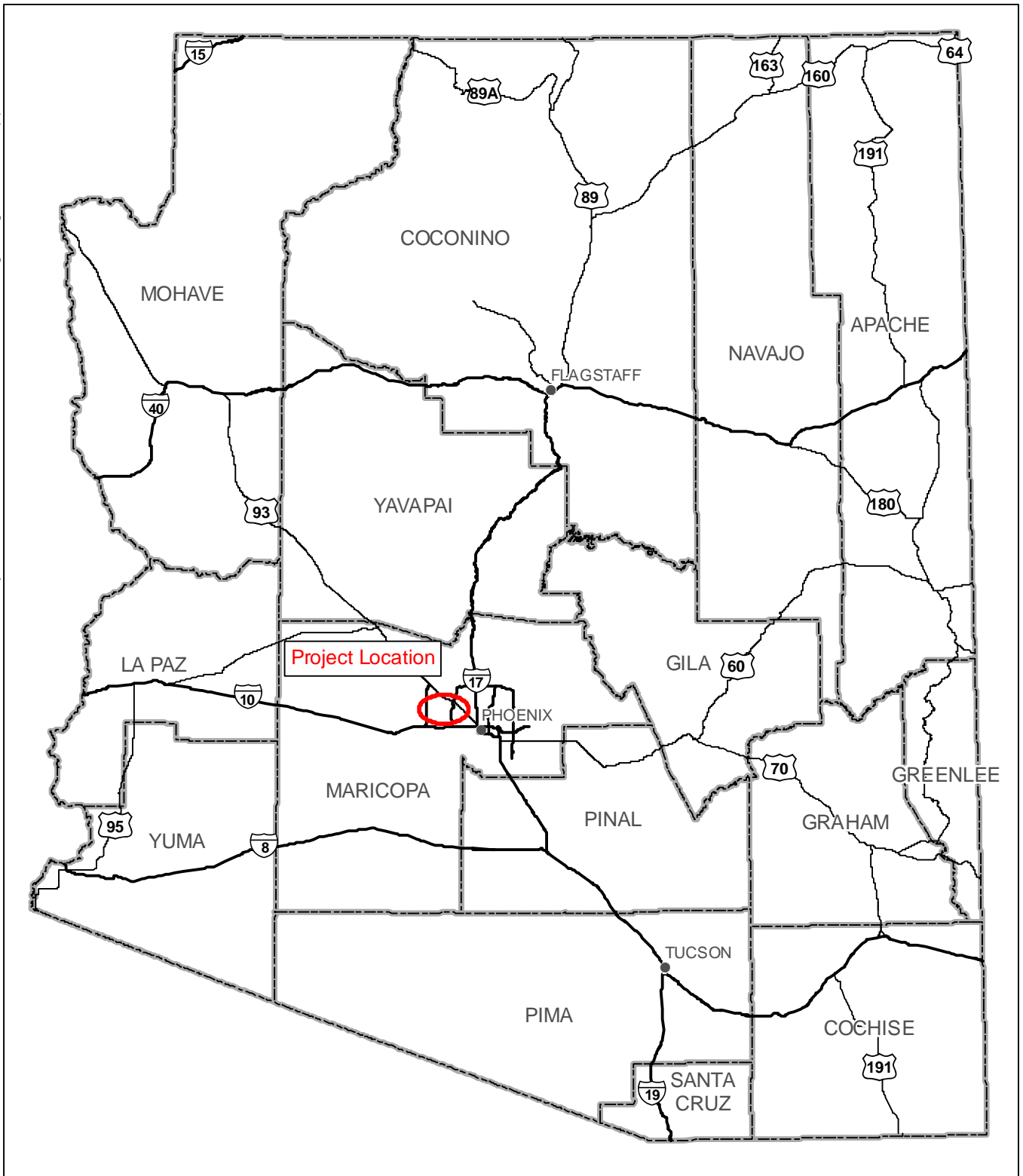
The NEPA process also provides for local, state, and other federal cooperating agencies; Native American tribes; and the public to provide input and/or comment through scoping and other public information and participation methods. Public coordination has been an ongoing process throughout development of concepts and alternatives for modifying the existing Northern Avenue to accommodate a new transportation facility.

1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW






A partnership of City of Glendale, City of Peoria, City of El Mirage, and the Maricopa County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) proposes to construct a regional transportation facility (roadway alignment) extending approximately 12 miles in length from SR 303L to US Route 60 (Figure 1-1 and Figure 1-2). The new facility would serve population growth; improve travel time between the western and central portions of the Phoenix metropolitan area; provide regional connectivity among SR 303L, SR 101L, and US 60; improve regional facility spacing; provide an Agua Fria River crossing; improve west-east traffic flow; implement regional plans; and reduce crash rates as a result of eliminating traffic signals, installation of raised median barriers, and access management.

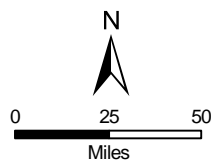
The four roadway alternatives evaluated in this draft EA encompass the new facility referred to as the Northern Parkway project. These alternatives include the following:

- Alternative 1 – Northern Avenue Alignment, Option 1 (with two traffic signals)
- Alternative 2 – Northern Avenue Alignment, Option 2 (no traffic signals)
- Alternative 3 – Southern Alignment
- No Build Alternative



Legend

-  Project Boundary
-  County Boundary
-  Interstate/Freeway
-  U.S. Highway
-  City/Town



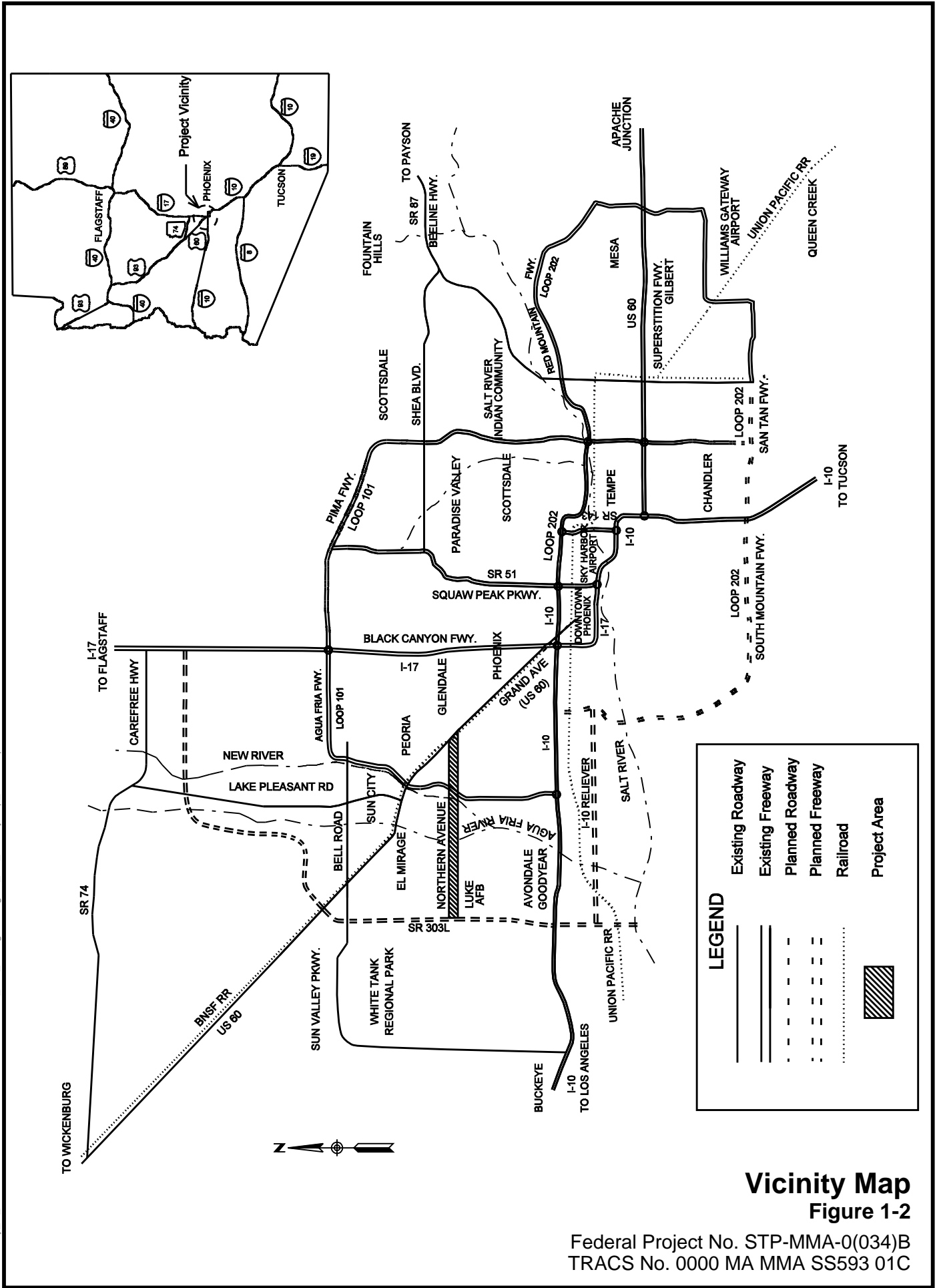
State Map

Northern Parkway

Federal Project No. STP-MMA-0(034)B
TRACS No. 0000 MA MMA SS593 01C

Source:
Base Map: ALRIS 1997-2008

Figure 1-1



Vicinity Map
Figure 1-2

Federal Project No. STP-MMA-0(034)B
TRACS No. 0000 MA MMA SS593 01C

1.2 LOCATION

Figure 1-1 shows the project location within Arizona, and Figure 1-2 shows the study area, which comprises 12 miles west-east from SR 303L to US 60 within Maricopa County, Arizona. The new facility (Alternatives 1, 2, and 3) would provide a high-capacity, limited-access west-east roadway located about midway between Bell Road and Interstate 10 (I-10) and would pass through or adjacent to the cities of Glendale, Peoria, and El Mirage and through unincorporated Maricopa County.

1.3 BACKGROUND

In 2001, the City of Glendale's *Transportation Plan* was updated with the assistance of a 61-member committee known as the Citizens Advisory Committee for Transportation Issues (CACTI). This group envisioned the need for a major west-east route in the vicinity of Northern Avenue to improve regional connectivity from the West Valley to major roadways such as SR 303L, SR 101L, and US 60. The West Valley consists of areas west of I-17, which include the cities of Glendale, El Mirage, and Peoria as well as portions of Phoenix and Surprise. Consequently, this idea was adopted in Glendale's *Transportation Plan*. In November 2001, the voters of Glendale passed a ½-cent sales tax to fund a variety of transportation projects throughout the city that were derived from this plan, including a "super street" at Northern Avenue. Subsequently, the "super street" concept was included in the *Regional Transportation Plan* (RTP) prepared by the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG). That RTP was adopted by the MAG Regional Council on November 25, 2003. This was the basis for Proposition 400, which was approved by the voters of Maricopa County in November 2004. Proposition 400 extended the countywide ½-cent sales tax to help fund the projects included in the RTP.

To study the "super street" concept, a management committee and a technical advisory committee were formed of all involved governmental jurisdictions: the City of Glendale, City of Peoria, City of El Mirage, Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), MCDOT, Flood Control District of Maricopa County (FCDMC), MAG, and Luke AFB.

1.3.1 Background of the Alternatives

CACTI identified the general vicinity of Northern Avenue for consideration as the location of the new "super street" facility for the following reasons:

- Northern Avenue and Camelback Road are the only continuous west-east arterials that extend from Grand Avenue to SR 303L that are within Glendale.

- Northern Avenue is centrally located between I-10 and Bell Road and has fewer developed properties abutting it than Camelback Road.
- Northern Avenue is a boundary street between Glendale and Peoria and between Glendale and El Mirage.
- Glendale Avenue ends at Litchfield Road due to Luke AFB and does not continue through to SR 303L.
- Bethany Home Road is not continuous west of SR 101L.

The Northern Avenue corridor was studied, and an alignment was proposed that generally would replace the existing Northern Avenue from Dysart Road to Grand Avenue (known as the Northern Avenue Alignment [Alternatives 1 and 2]). Alternatives 1 and 2 also would include constructing a portion of the new facility from Sarival Avenue to Dysart Road approximately 0.5 mile north of Northern Avenue.

During the public scoping meeting for this draft EA on June 1, 2005, concerned residents made suggestions to consider an alignment that departed from the Northern Avenue corridor to avoid affecting existing neighborhoods between 103rd and 112th avenues. Known as the Southern Alignment (Alternative 3), this suggested route would align the future roadway southeast through undeveloped property from Dysart to El Mirage roads, then generally follow Glendale Avenue and return to Northern Avenue west of 91st Avenue. Therefore, Alternative 3 is the same as Alternatives 1 and 2 in the western and eastern portions, but deviates from it in the central portion.

Funding for the new facility would come from a number of sources, including discretionary funds from the FHWA's Surface Transportation Program and MAG (known as STP-MAG), and could include regional funds from Maricopa County sales tax, funds from ADOT and FCDMC, and matching funds from MCDOT in any combination with the cities of Glendale, Peoria, and El Mirage.