01/21/2022

Dear Director Halikowski,

I am writing you to inquire about the timeline and status of the completion of the final 26-mile section of the I-10 between Casa Grande and Phoenix, as well as to encourage your agency to take action in the interim to improve safety for those traveling on the I-10.

As you may know, just since 2018, there have been hundreds of serious accidents on the I-10 between Casa Grande and Phoenix, and tragically, 15 people have lost their lives along that stretch of the highway. This danger, coupled with the routine delays and backups, makes the I-10 situation one of the most critical issues both for my constituents and for all Arizonans that travel along the I-10.

Given that the Governor has proposed an additional $400 million investment in widening the I-10, I would like an expected timeline for the construction of the final 26 miles. If the Legislature approves the funding for the project, when can we tell our constituents they can expect shovels to be in the ground?

In the meantime, what is the department doing to improve safety for drivers who travel this route? Is the agency considering steps to encourage better driving behavior on the highway, and if so, what are those steps?

I would like the agency to deploy additional signs along the I-10, electronic or otherwise, to remind drivers of the requirement for slower drivers to stay in the right lane. Additionally, I would like the agency to place signs with information about requirements for truckers when driving on the highway.

Thank you for your attention on this critical issue, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Representative Teresa Martinez
April 4, 2022

The Honorable Theresa Martinez
State Representative, District 11
1700 W Washington
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Representative Martinez,

I received your letter on March 25, 2022 regarding the Department’s progress towards improving the I-10 between Casa Grande and Phoenix. Thank you for your comments regarding this crucial project. I share your concerns regarding the current highway and look forward to the State Legislature’s upcoming budget that will provide the necessary funding to leverage federal grants and address the expansion and improve the safety of this key commerce corridor.

As you are likely aware, ADOT has invested heavily in the expansion of the I-10 between Phoenix and Tucson over the past 5 years, including:

- $84.5 million for adding a fourth lane and a new traffic interchange at Ruthrauff Road in the Tucson area completed in 2021.
- $72.6 million for adding a third lane and new traffic interchange at SR 87 in the Picacho/Eloy area completed in 2020.
- $44.6 million for adding a third lane in the Casa Grande area – Earley Road to I-8 and other improvements completed in 2019.

These projects have expanded capacity and increased safety on this corridor, but we haven’t stopped. As we speak, ADOT is preparing for the final phase, the widening of the last 26 mile section of the I-10 just south of Chandler. While we do not have all of the funds necessary to complete this project, ADOT is actively working on several key components to ensure readiness:

- Funds Programmed: Nearly $250 million is programmed/budgeted, including $90 million for the Gila River Bridge construction, $9 million for design for widening from the Gila River Bridge to SR 387 and just under $150 million for design and construction for widening from the L-202 (Santan) to Riggs Road.
- Project Scope: ADOT, MAG and Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) have agreed on the development plan for widening I-10 for the full 26-mile stretch.
- Draft Design Concept Report: Approved by ADOT and MAG, currently being reviewed by GRIC.
- Draft Environmental Assessment: Approved by ADOT and MAG, under review by GRIC and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, with public comment scheduled for later in the year.
- Gila River Bridge: Final design to be completed by winter 2022/23, with construction on schedule to start early in 2023.
- Federal Grant Funds: ADOT will be applying for the federal MEGA grant to provide additional funds for this critical project. This is a competitive discretionary grant that requires the Department to demonstrate several key components are met by this project, and also requires a significant amount of state match. ADOT remains hopeful that the Arizona Legislature will
immediately appropriate $400 million in state funds, as requested by the Executive Budget Initiative, prior to the application deadline to ensure the most competitive application possible for this grant opportunity. To include these monies in the application, the Legislature would need to act on this appropriation by May 13, 2022.

Your letter asks when to expect shovels in the ground on this project. With the funds we have now, we can phase the project by starting on the south end of the corridor (Pinal County) in early FY 2024 and on the north end (Maricopa County) in late FY 2024. If ADOT receives sufficient funds from the Legislature and is successful in receiving federal grants, the entire corridor could be completed through a single project with the same construction start date of early FY 2024. While funding is one hurdle, concurrence by the GRIC, allottees and the Bureau of Indian Affairs are paramount for shovels to get in the ground. The Gila River Bridge project is fully funded and is scheduled to begin early next calendar year.

While we work towards securing funds for project completion, we are also committed to looking for ways to improve driver safety on the corridor in the meantime. We are currently working on new signs to be placed between Casa Grande and SR 347 with “trucks right lane only” directions. The intent of this signage is to help improve traffic flow and backups that occur on this segment of the road, as well as reduce the potential for crashes. We anticipate placing these signs within the next month. Additionally, we will utilize the overhead dynamic message signs (DMS) for additional messaging for trucks to stay in the right lane through the 2-lane section of I-10 south of Phoenix. We will continue to work with our enforcement partners to encourage safe driving behaviors, and to remind drivers that speeding and distracted driving are dangerous. ADOT is also engaging an independent research group to evaluate and make recommendations regarding median safety statewide.

I would be happy to meet with you and discuss these items further. Please feel free to contact my office if you have any additional questions or would like to schedule a meeting. Thank you.

Sincerely,

John S. Halikowski
Director