



**Next Move Arizona
Statewide Listening Tour**

**Douglas Area Listening Session
Meeting Notes**

December 19, 2025

Attendees

ADOT and Consultant Team

- Mike Kies, ADOT Strategic Advisor
- Ruth Garcia, ADOT Regional Transportation Planner
- Kristin Darr, Consultant Team Facilitator
- Dillon Kennedy, Consultant Support

Agency and Public Participants

- Alberto Reyes, City of Douglas Deputy Public Works Director
- Alex, Cochise College
- Ana Urquijo, City of Douglas City Manager
- Barbara Lang, Cochise County Health and Social Services Director
- Brad Simmons, Cochise County Engineering and Natural Resources Interim Director / Assistant Director of Transportation
- Caroline Harris, Bisbee Bikeways Secretary
- Frank Ambriz, Cochise County Planning and Zoning Commission Representative for District 2
- Gerry Gonzalez, Cochise County Planning and Zoning Commission Representative for District 2
- Jackie Watkins, Former Cochise County Director of Engineering and Natural Resources
- Jane Montgomery, Cochise County Public Information Officer
- John Benedict, Cochise County Planning and Zoning Commission Representative for District 2
- Jose Grijalva, City of Douglas Mayor
- Kathleen Gomez, Cochise County District 2 Supervisor
- Kathryn “Cado” Daily, Water Wise Program Coordinator for Cochise County Cooperative Extension
- Meggen Connolley, Bisbee Bikeways Executive Director
- Sharon Gilman, Cochise County Administrator

Welcome

- Mike opened the meeting with a welcome and a round of introductions.



Discussion

- Identifying the appropriate ADOT contacts for specific topics is difficult, and locating contact information through the website can be challenging.
- There is support for preserving rail infrastructure and reconnecting lines to enable potential passenger rail, as many historic mining communities are already situated along former rail corridors.
- ADOT should assume responsibility for Davis Road, which is currently a county facility, as expected increases in truck traffic will accelerate deterioration beyond county maintenance capacity.
- There is a need for improved communication between ADOT and leadership in southern Arizona.
- Statewide planning should avoid being Maricopa County-centric and better account for the needs of rural communities.
- Questions were raised about how James Ranch Road will connect the border crossing to I-10 and whether a master plan exists to address increased traffic from the new port of entry improvements.
- The region is not currently equipped for the future increase in truck traffic associated with the new commercial port of entry. While the port expansion will create a modern facility, the surrounding roadway network is not prepared. Currently, US 191 is in poor condition and Davis Road would be unsafe for truck movements.
- The Arizona-Sonora Border Infrastructure Master Plan (BIMP) outlines tiered, prioritized improvements with City of Douglas input, including proposed US 191 widening and pedestrian walkways.
- Cattle truck crossings at the border are expected to increase, but the current roadway system is not configured to handle livestock transport traffic.
- Cattle crossings at the border are expected to increase with port improvements, but the surrounding roadway system is not configured to accommodate livestock transport. Some access routes remain unpaved, and upgrades will require coordination between ADOT and Cochise County.
- Concerns were raised about potential impacts to cemeteries located on both sides of US 191 near Douglas in the event of roadway widening. The west side of the cemetery is historic and unique with graves facing south, and there is hesitation about any disturbance or relocation if US 191 is proposed to be widened.
- Sensitive transportation issues will require thoughtful community engagement to build understanding and support.
- After 2 p.m., congestion increases substantially across the road network and is expected to worsen with future growth and port activity.
- Improvements to James Ranch Road may shift traffic onto SR 80 rather than resolving congestion, raising concerns about network-wide impacts.
- Straightening and improving Silver Creek Road could create an alternative east-west route that relieves pressure on US 191, and surrounding public land may make widening and improvements more feasible.



- Congestion on US 191 (Panamerican Highway) is expected to worsen and will likely fall disproportionately on Douglas until alternative routes are developed.
- Routine trips in Douglas, such as residents traveling to Walmart, are already experiencing congestion and delay.
- Early planning and action will be important to stay ahead of expected growth and port-related traffic demand.
- There is interest in implementing bicycle and pedestrian facilities in rural Arizona, where highways often divide communities and safe cross-town travel requires moving along vehicle-oriented corridors.
- Bisbee Bikeways has independently raised approximately \$8 million for trail and pedestrian improvements, including converting existing sidewalks into shared-use paths. Several project elements overlap with planned ADOT work, creating opportunities for coordinated delivery.
- Strict design criteria significantly increase project costs, making it difficult to deliver bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and collaboration on such efforts can be challenging.
- A proposed mantra by the local community is to “move people, not just vehicles,” emphasizing multimodal mobility.
- A 27-mile shared-use path system is planned, with the Lowell to Lavender Pit segment funded and approved as the first phase.
- Cycling around the Lavender Pit area has resulted in fatalities due to constrained roadway conditions, underscoring the need for safer active transportation facilities.
- Binational coordination is important and transportation planning should account for conditions, mobility needs, and priorities on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.
- Communication is conducted locally in Cochise County, and involving the county Public Information Officer enhances success. Effective strategies have included car-by-car outreach and door-to-door engagement.
- Bisbee Bikeways is supporting the Sun Corridor Trail concept from Las Vegas to Douglas, including a potential rails-to-trails segment, and noted that ADOT support could meaningfully advance the effort and boost outdoor recreation tourism.
- Local and regional transit options exist, including Cochise Connection and other shuttle services, but hours and coverage are constrained.
- There is no public transportation connection to Tucson or Tucson International Airport, including for medical travel, and low-income residents face significant affordability challenges when accessing services in larger urban areas.
- The region historically had more robust transit service during the Phelps Dodge mining era, when population densities and commuting patterns supported more frequent service, and there is now a strong need for more affordable options.
- Commercial bus carriers pass through Douglas without stopping, underscoring the need for interregional transportation connections.
- Border communities invested heavily in developing the Arizona-Sonora BIMP and there is tremendous uncertainty about its implementation and next steps.
- Participants emphasized the need to make ADOT’s planning, programming, and funding processes easier for the public to understand, noting that projects often



require ongoing advocacy even after being programmed and that the funding process feels uncertain.

- SR 347 was cited as an example where sustained lobbying was required to move a project from long-range programming into funded construction, reinforcing perceptions that passive waiting does not result in project delivery.
- Participants encouraged clearer communication that bridges complex technical information to public understanding, noting that highly technical meetings can limit engagement and make it difficult to follow major projects and plans.
- A history of promised but undelivered transportation improvements has contributed to low trust in State government.
- Participants emphasized that while engagement activities occur, there are information gaps and a strong sense of distrust, with perceptions that local needs are not being heard or reflected in decisions.
- Douglas was described as having once been an “All-American town,” with substantial investment during the Phelps Dodge era. While investment has declined in recent decades, participants believe the community can return to that level of vitality. There is strong pride of place, with residents expressing love for their community, county, and region, though government actions have contributed to a sense of distrust.
- Participants emphasized that although the region is smaller than Phoenix or Tucson, it has a strong and motivated community, and there is a desire to re-establish partnerships and work collaboratively toward shared objectives.
- Local leaders acknowledged the need for more consistent civic participation and a unified community voice to rebuild trust, but noted that limited media infrastructure makes coordination challenging and that state agencies must also be willing to listen for trust to be restored.
- Improving the quality of public-facing information would allow county and municipal partners to act as effective amplifiers of ADOT communication, and participants expressed interest in more two-way feedback rather than one-way posting.
- Participants expressed interest in more regular listening sessions and earlier engagement, noting a perception that the 5-year program is developed without community input and asking whether key voices could be brought together earlier on major projects.
- Participants encouraged ADOT to leverage small towns as partners in delivering statewide goals, noting that including and supporting small communities benefits the state as a whole.
- Participants emphasized the need to identify shared objectives and collaborate to spur economic development, noting that without working together the region risks remaining in the same position.
- There is a perception that decisions are made in Maricopa County and dictated to rural areas without meaningful inclusion in the process.
- In-person engagement helps rural communities feel included in statewide decision-making processes.
- Greater transparency and visible progress updates were identified as important for rebuilding trust and allowing local leaders to accurately communicate with their communities.



- Participants supported continuation of Transportation Alternatives (TA) funding and emphasized that TA should remain dedicated to bicycle and pedestrian projects, even if states gain flexibility in how those funds may be used.
- Without prioritizing bicycle and pedestrian safety, fatalities will continue, as symbolized by the growing number of “white bikes” memorializing those killed on roadways.
- All Aboard, a senior citizens group, is working to foster greater independence through additional transportation options beyond driving.
- Gas tax has not been raised in decades and there is a perception that ADOT uses this as an explanation for lack of available funding. Greater public understanding of transportation funding and revenue contribution is needed.
- Recent County Supervisors Association discussions focused on transportation funding reforms, including vehicle registration fees for non-gas vehicles. Rural counties noted they may need to lobby the legislature to ensure their needs are considered in future approaches. Cochise County currently receives more Highway User Revenue Fund (HURF) dollars than it generates.
- Active transportation projects need a dedicated funding category to avoid being deprioritized behind roadway needs.
- Interest in low-cost crowdsourcing tools to gather local data and improve situational awareness for planning and maintenance.
- Interest in exploring nontraditional funding mechanisms, such as vehicle tire fees, to supplement transportation revenues.
- Questions were raised about whether Arizona Town Hall has hosted topic-specific town halls related to transportation, and the Center for the Future of Arizona was identified as another group to engage.
- Request for clarity on how ADOT prioritizes projects under limited funding, with acknowledgment that it can be difficult for communities to present a unified set of priorities.
- Interest in understanding how the ADOT Five-Year Program is developed and where public input is integrated into the process.
- Recreation was noted as a strong driver of local economic development and return on investment.
- Safely and efficiently moving commercial trucks through communities and onto the interstate network is important, particularly for industries such as cattle and mining.
- Douglas has a binational relationship with adjacent Mexican border communities that is essential to the broader regional economy.’
- A participant requested that a bicycle and pedestrian connection from the end of the Lavender Pit shared-use path to Warren be included in the ADOT Five-Year Program.

Key Takeaways

- Rural communities want to ensure their needs and priorities are reflected in statewide transportation planning and not overshadowed by metro-area decision-making.



- Border infrastructure and the Douglas commercial port expansion will generate significant increases in freight demand, but the surrounding roadway network is not prepared.
- Douglas functions as part of a binational region, and transportation planning must account for cross-border economic, social, and freight connections.
- Improved transparency and clearer understanding of ADOT's planning, programming, and funding processes are necessary to rebuild trust and support informed public communication.
- Earlier and more consistent engagement is preferred, with interest in more listening sessions and two-way dialogue rather than one-way information sharing.
- Local governments want to be partners in project development and statewide initiatives and believe small communities can help deliver statewide goals if included.
- Active transportation projects struggle to compete under current funding structures.
- Lack of interregional transit connectivity creates hardship for seniors, low-income residents, and those without vehicles.
- Recreation, trails, and shared-use path investments are seen as economic drivers that support tourism and community vitality.
- Freight mobility is essential to key industries in the region and safe, efficient truck movement to the interstate network is a priority.
- There is a strong sense of local pride and motivation to collaborate on shared objectives, but perceived historical underinvestment and unfulfilled promises have contributed to distrust.
- A participant requested that a bicycle and pedestrian connection from Lavender Pit to Warren be included in the ADOT Five-Year Program, referencing SR 80 between Mule Pass Tunnel and the SR 80/SR 92 traffic circle.