

INTERSTATE 10 PAPAGO FREEWAY



Phoenix, Maricopa County, Arizona

Arizona Department of Transportation
City of Phoenix
Federal Highway Administration

Completed mid-1990's

Project Type: Urban Freeway Reconstruct

DESCRIPTION

The Papago Freeway runs seamlessly through the middle of downtown Phoenix. From above, sound walls and landscaping conceal the recessed roadway. Pedestrian and bicycle crossings are plentiful. In the heart of downtown, the freeway actually disappears for half a mile, capped beneath a 13-acre deck park built over the I-10 main line lanes.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Originally planned as a “double deck” freeway through central Phoenix, public engagement inspired a depressed freeway with landscaping, screen walls, and a 13-acre deck park. Phoenix Mayor Terry Goddard was the inspiration for this process that created a solution supported by the public, as well as the City of Phoenix, Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Over 150 public meetings were held that produced a successful partnership and outcome.

CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS APPROACH

For years, a five-mile portion of I-10 through central Phoenix was the missing link in the cross-continental highway that connected Los Angeles, California and Jacksonville, Florida. The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) initially proposed a double-decked freeway that divided the downtown area into two parts. The City of Phoenix, along with some of the oldest and most historic neighborhoods in the downtown area, demanded that the project be reconsidered with more community involvement in the design of the project. The City of Phoenix, led by then Mayor Terry Goddard, formed a partnership with ADOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), producing a solution that depressed I-10 and covered it with a lid or deck. The deck was designed as an urban park that would maintain a critical connection between downtown Phoenix and the Central Avenue Business District. This urban park, now known as the Margaret T. Hance Deck Park, created a community asset and a catalyst for economic development in an area, that for years was decaying because of



the proposed “double deck” freeway. The FHWA, ADOT, and the City agreed to share capital and maintenance costs for the project.

Today the park has lived up to the investment of taxpayer dollars by restoring value to historic residential areas adjacent to the park and promoting new investment in the area including downtown housing, commercial buildings and an extension to the downtown arts district. The park is home to the Hemiji Friendship Garden (Hemiji, Japan is the sister city of Phoenix, Arizona) that includes a recently expanded Japanese Garden including a lake and interpretive center that has a national reputation of excellence.

This project was the successful beginning of the award-winning freeway system in Phoenix that includes the Squaw Peak Parkway, Red Mountain Freeway, Pima Freeway and Superstition Freeway.

OUTCOME The Papago Freeway is an aesthetic, economic and cultural success. This project is a pioneer for the tenants and principles of today’s Context Sensitive Design/ Solutions.

CHALLENGES The greatest challenge for this project was the acceptance by all stakeholders that new, innovative ideas could produce an outcome acceptable to all. The public art program has remained a controversial component of the plan. As recently as last year, portions of public art on the Squaw Peak Parkway (built at the same time as the Papago Freeway) have been removed because of opposition by residential neighborhoods. The failure of the art program has been attributed to the fact that it did not go through a public involvement process as did the rest of the project. Ironically, the same local officials that insisted that the freeway be designed with citizen input, didn’t follow their own advice when selecting public art.

FUNDING \$500 million

LESSONS LEARNED This project was another one of the early examples that personified the “old way” of doing business. ADOT viewed this project as an engineering problem that needed to be solved by professionals within the organization. Millions of dollars were spent on detail plans that were ultimately rejected by the public because ADOT was unable to recognize that issues such as pedestrian access, economic development, community continuity, and place-making were issues that were top priorities for the public. This project demonstrated the need for a collaboration of disciplines, partnered in an open public process as a recipe for success.

KEY WORDS *Applicable Project Delivery Stages:* Administration, Planning, Design, Construction, Maintenance

Applicable Transportation Professionals: Highway Engineers, Structural Engineers, Landscape Architects, Historians

Applicable Transportation Modes: Highway, Transit, Toll, Bicycle, Pedestrian

Transportation Topics: Visual Quality, Environmental Justice, Safety, Mobility

WEB LINKS http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthemove/collection/object_671.html
http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthemove/collection/object_672.html
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/byday/fhbd0810.htm>

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