The Case for Freight

Increasing capacity on our nation’s transportation system will:

• Unlock Gridlock,
• Generate Jobs,
• Deliver Freight,
• Access Energy,
• Connect Communities

Did you know?

• The amount of freight moved in this country—from milk, toothpaste and toilet paper to sparkplugs, wheat and wind turbines—is expected to double in the next 40 years?
• The Interstate Highway System represents only 4 percent of total miles but carries 70 percent of commercial truck traffic?
• Each of the top ten worst freight-truck bottlenecks cause over one million hours of delay a year?

“The Phoenix-Tucson corridor is the transportation heart and soul of an untapped vital economic engine that stretches across one of the fastest-growing areas in America. Arizona is exploring 21st Century solutions, such as inter-city rail and connections with our freight rail partners to transform city, suburban and rural areas. Passenger and freight rail projects throughout Arizona will help diversify our economy with job opportunities, affordable housing and a new vitality for decades to come.”

— John S. Halikowski, Arizona Department of Transportation Director

Freight Capacity Needs

Rail Improvements—Phoenix-to-Tucson Corridor

The heavily traveled corridor between Phoenix and Tucson has been and continues to be the subject of many planning studies over the past four decades. It is the core of the Arizona Sun Corridor Megopolitan, one of 11 emerging mega regions in the United States. A majority of the trips between Phoenix and Tucson are currently made on Interstate 10, which is the only high-capacity corridor connecting these cities. Recent studies have been completed for the I-10 corridor that indicate the need to widen the freeway to 10 lanes, and additional parallel capacity is needed to accommodate the freight and traffic movements projected for this corridor. Each of the rural communities located between Phoenix and Tucson are planned to be incorporated into the Sun Corridor, and would benefit from parallel corridors to I-10 that would ensure efficient connections with these growing cities.

I-10 Corridor is the principal connection for people and goods between Phoenix and Tucson

The proposed project would establish intercity passenger rail service between Phoenix and Tucson, which would provide an alternative mode of transport for travel between these cities, and enhance the connectivity to several communities by planning for passenger station locations along the route. A new rail line would be defined for all or part of the route, which can be coordinated with land-use planning of several rural communities located in Pima and Pinal Counties. Currently, several potential corridor alignments are under study, each would have the potential to connect several rural communities to both Phoenix and Tucson.

For more information: http://expandingcapacity.transportation.org/
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Capacity Needs continued

Interstate 10 is also a major corridor for freight movements, not only within the state of Arizona, but is a primary route for transcontinental trade. The Sunset Corridor of the Union Pacific Railroad parallels the interstate for much of the distance between Phoenix and Tucson. This rail corridor is a primary movement of cargo from Los Angeles to various locations across the country. Currently the Sunset Corridor is primarily a single-track mainline that does not have excess capacity to accommodate additional freight movements.

Union Pacific has plans to double track the Sunset Corridor, but additional rail-yard capacity is needed to enhance freight movements between Phoenix and Tucson

A separate project would be to expand the capacity of the Sunset Corridor and the Phoenix Subdivision of the UPRR to accommodate additional freight movements between Phoenix, Tucson, and various communities located in Pinal County. To enhance the movement of freight in this corridor, a new rail classification yard and intermodal facilities are needed within the corridor to expand the capacity of the Tucson and Phoenix rail-yards, which cannot expand due to physical limitations. The new rail facilities could provide additional employment and economic development to rural communities located along the Sunset Corridor such as Casa Grande, Eloy, and Marana Arizona.

The combination of intercity passenger rail service and strategic freight rail improvements within the Phoenix-to-Tucson corridor will provide an alternative mode for the movement of people and goods within the emerging Sun Corridor. The projects will provide multimodal nodes within several rural communities between these cities where future growth and economic development can be concentrated to create livable population centers built on the principles of smart growth.
ADOT is currently studying potential intercity corridors that could provide an alternative mode of transportation for several rural communities between Phoenix and Tucson.
The recently completed Pinal County Comprehensive Plan is compatible with the proposed projects to improve passenger and freight rail between Phoenix and Tucson.