

Camelback Pedestrian Underpass



Problem

A busy 6-lane street between a park and a commercial district in East Phoenix needed better pedestrian access to connect the two centers and to promote foot traffic to the east side.

Background

As far back as 1990, the idea to improve the pedestrian environment in East Village Core was proposed in the city plan. After design assistance was awarded to further research the proposal, the Camelback East Primary Core Pedestrian Corridor Study was completed in 1998. The study recommended a pedestrian overpass.



The underpass stretches under a six-lane road.

Two separate Public Open House meetings were held, along with consultation with technical and citizen advisories. It was determined that an underpass, compared to a foot bridge, would be the most user-friendly and safe alternative. It would also provide an unobstructed scenic view of the mountains.

Solution

The Phoenix Department of Street Transportation began design and construction of a pedestrian underpass in 2006 to enhance the area's access on foot. Not only did the underpass provide safe passage for pedestrians, it also incorporated decorative pavement, landscaping, rubberized asphalt integrated into the pavement to minimize noise and vibration, and ventilation to ensure proper air circulation. Improvements at the surrounding intersections included enlarged pedestrian and bike refuge areas, new ADA area directional ramps at corners, canopy shade structures, wayfinding markers at intersections, pedestrian countdown indicators on traffic signals, increased crossing time, and planted buffers.

Safety was addressed in several ways. The underpass featured security lighting, a skylight, and a wide, unobstructed environment to provide an atmosphere for personal security. Other ideas discussed included security cameras and patrols by security personnel from nearby properties, or merchandise carts to provide a constant people presence. In addition, wrought iron fencing was installed in the median to the west of the underpass to discourage crossings at locations other than the adjacent signals or the underpass.

Public input was an important component of this project. Four public meetings provided an opportunity for the public to discuss proposed plans for the pedestrian underpass with the project team. In addition, the City and consultant team worked closely with a citizen advisory committee that was formed specifically for the project. The advisory committee was composed of representatives from key stakeholder groups within the project area, including adjacent businesses, business associations, citizen associations, city council, and more.

One challenge encountered during the process was resistance to the project from large adjacent land owners who felt that the additional pedestrian connection would allow their neighbor's business to "steal" foot traffic or parking revenue. Sadly, during the review process a tragedy occurred when a 13 year old girl was struck and killed while

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crossing the street at night 300 feet from the nearest traffic signal. This tragedy, in addition to two other deaths over the last decade, produced enough media coverage and community support to overcome property owner's opposition.

Funding was provided through the Arizona Highway Users Revenue, Federal Street Transportation Aid, Water Civic Improvement Corporation Funds, and Transit Funds. Funding was approved by the city council to not exceed \$6 million. Total costs were estimated at \$6,005,500 with \$1,650,000 in Federal aid for construction.



The underpass also incorporates art to improve the pedestrian environment.

Results

The underpass was only recently completed in May 2007. While some finishing touches remain, the overpass is being well used and received by pedestrians.

Contact

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Image Source:

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For more information, please visit the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center Web site at www.walkinginfo.org.

