



# **Sahuarita Road Wildlife Study (La Villita Road to Country Club) RTA Wildlife linkages Project Funding Proposal**

## **1. NAME/ORGANIZATION**

Town of Sahuarita

## **2. PROJECT TITLE**

Sahuarita Road Phase 1 Wildlife Study – La Villita Road to Country Club Road

## **3. INTRODUCTION**

### **Proposal Purpose**

The purpose of this proposal is to request RTA Wildlife Linkages funding to determine wildlife linkages in the area of Sahuarita Road between La Villita Road and Country Club Road. The project location is shown in Exhibit A. Specifically, this project will assess the distribution of local wildlife species, potential movement routes and research existing national, state and local databases such as Animal-vehicle collision (AVC) to determine the species that would need to be considered in the design phase of this project. In addition, this study will recommend potential wildlife crossings and recommend types of structures that should be erected to minimize hazards to the local wildlife.

### **Project Background**

The Town of Sahuarita is currently working on plans to widen Sahuarita Road from La Villita to Country Club Road. The Town of Sahuarita engineering staff would like to include the recommended mitigation proposals in the construction drawings in order to get them built during the widening of Sahuarita Road. This project was initiated due to the high volume of traffic projected to use the roadway due to new housing and commercial developments being constructed along the project area. However, information on the existing and potential locations where wildlife species may cross the roadway is non-existing. Completion of wildlife linkages research along the project length is critical in order to include the construction of recommended structures in the construction documents.

### **Wildlife linkages background**

The project area outlined above is a major arterial roadway for the Town of Sahuarita and it is projected to become a major east and west corridor connecting I-19 to SR83 and I-10 in Southern Arizona. The Regional Transportation Authority has identified Sahuarita Road as potential candidate for an outside loop in the Tucson area. Therefore, incorporating appropriate wildlife linkage structures into this roadway project is critical for the maintenance of wildlife connectivity in this area. This project will provide the data to support such recommendations.

### **Ramifications of no action**

If funding is not approved for this project, the Town of Sahuarita engineering staff will be unable to provide recommendations to the design team for the incorporation of wildlife linkage structures into the design of this roadway project. This will lead to increased wildlife mortality and fragmentation of wildlife connectivity and habitat in this area.

#### **4. OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this project are to:

- a. Identify the species of wildlife crossing the identified project area;
- b. Identify wildlife crossing locations along the project length; and
- c. Incorporate mitigation recommendations to the roadway design documents.

#### **5. APPROACH**

The goal of the first phase for this study is to provide technical expertise on connectivity zones across Sahuarita Road between La Villita Road and Country Club. At a minimum, SWCA Environmental Consultants will conduct a site assessment to identify wildlife crossing zones along this roadway and relate those zones to existing and potential roadway crossing structures and to current land conditions and ownership. SWCA has included additional tasks to conduct focused field surveys that would serve to further evaluate wildlife species distribution and movement across Sahuarita Road. The purpose of these focused surveys are to identify additional species that may not be detected during our initial site assessments; these focused surveys are independent of the initial survey. SWCA will achieve this phase by conducting the following tasks.

##### **Task 1. Literature Search and Data Synthesis, Focal Species Identification, and Site Assessment**

**I.** Synthesize and summarize previously identified wildlife crossing zones through studies, documents, or databases (focal species may include lesser long-nosed bat, mule deer, bobcat, and coyote, among others that will be determined as data are obtained). Sources may include Critical Habitat area maps from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service database; Pima Association of Governments planning maps; Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, City of Tucson Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), and Town of Marana HCP planning maps and conservation areas; existing data or studies that have investigated movement patterns or behavior relative to highways, habitat, and other landscape features; and animal-vehicle collision (AVC) data from state, regional, and/or local accident reports, records, and databases;

**II.** Characterize existing and potential wildlife crossing zones, including existing structures, fill slopes, and at-grade crossing areas (e.g., choke points, high-AVC areas); and

**III.** Identify and assess multiple landscape and human-made features that may impede or encourage wildlife movement across Sahuarita Road.

##### **Task 2. Crossing Location Prioritization and Design Recommendations**

**I.** Prioritize crossing locations based on the feasibility of installing a particular mitigation measure, the relative biological significance of that location, and the opportunity for the

long-term success of the mitigation measure; and

**II.** Recommend mitigation measures and designs that would contribute to increasing the crossing success of the focal species across the roadway.

**6. FINAL DELIVERABLES**

A Wildlife Linkage Assessment Report will be provided that will include the following;

- a. Landscape description (“Ecological Overview”) of each linkage along Sahuarita Road
- b. List of target or focal species
- c. Summary of field survey results and evaluations
- d. Roadway assessment
- e. Large, detailed fold-out maps of the area
- f. Mitigation recommendations.

**7. TIME TABLE**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Mid-April - July 2008	Task 1: -Research existing documents -Assess existing structures -Identify potential crossing zones
May – August 2008	Task 2 - Prioritize crossing locations - Develop mitigation measures
Early August 2008	Submit draft report
Late August 2008	Submit final report

## 8. BUDGET SUMMARY

<b>Category</b>	<b>Cost</b>
<b>Task 1. Literature Search and Data Synthesis, Focal Species Identification, and Site Assessment</b> <b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$7,000.00</b>
<b>Task 2. Crossing Location Prioritization and Design Recommendations</b> <b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$3,000.00</b>
<b>TOTAL RTA FUNDING REQUEST:</b>	<b>\$10,000.00</b>

## 9. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS/ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE

### SWCA Environmental Consultants

Tom Furgason, Program Director  
Eleanor Gladding, Senior Biologist/Project Manager  
Geoff Soroka, Biologist/Project Manager

TECHNICAL EXHIBIT A

Project Location

