

Statement to the State Transportation Board at the Casa Grande meeting on 1/18/08:

Mr. Chairman, members of the Board, my name is David Omick and I am a 10 year resident of Cochise County.

At last month's meeting you heard a number of eloquent statements opposing an I-10 bypass route through the San Pedro Valley. I would like to take a few minutes this morning to put those statements in a geographical context.

What we are speaking of is not just the Middle San Pedro Valley, but a landscape scale area of increasingly rare ecological integrity. It stretches from Tucson on its western boundary to the Sulphur Springs and Aravaipa valleys on the east side, from the town of San Manuel to the north to the village of Pomerene in the south. In contrast to the Tucson metropolitan area immediately to the west, which is populated by roughly 1 million people, this almost entirely undeveloped landscape encompasses a landmass 1 ½ times the size of Rhode Island, yet is home to perhaps 300 people.

Its environmental value has long been recognized by private and governmental agencies. Within its boundaries lie a national park, a national forest, 3 federally designated wilderness areas and one of the Nature Conservancy's largest U. S. preserves. In addition, a large and growing number of conservation and archeological easements are held by the Bureau of Land Management, The Nature Conservancy and the Center for Desert Archeology. It is important to understand that the entire area functions as an ecological whole. As such, it contains the highest diversity of mammal species in North America and is also the main flyway for migratory birds in the American West.

An interstate highway through the center of this unique and irreplaceable environmental treasure would irrevocably shatter it.

I would like to add my voice to the growing numbers of private and governmental agencies and concerned citizens who are asking you to have the wisdom and the foresight to vote against this proposed interstate bypass route.

Thank you for your time and consideration.