



Laughlin-Bullhead City Bridge Project Purpose and Need

The purpose of this project is to provide a Colorado River crossing for vehicles in addition to the existing Laughlin Bridge. Additionally the purpose is to:

- Accommodate present and future traffic demand between Laughlin, Nevada and Bullhead City, Arizona
- Improve congestion on Arizona State Route (SR) 95 including north/south traffic flows and overall circulation within Bullhead City
- Enhance connections between Laughlin and Bullhead City
- Improve access and delivery of emergency services to the region in a manner that is safe, reliable and cost-effective while avoiding, minimizing and/ or mitigating effects on the communities and the environment.

An additional bridge crossing would provide increased mobility and safety, improved regional connectivity, and better access between the communities.

An additional bridge is needed in the Laughlin-Bullhead City area as a result of the following factors:

Travel Patterns and Traffic Demand

In 2004, there were approximately 44,300 total bridge crossings per day on the existing Laughlin Bridge (*HDR-Draft TDM Technical Memorandum; April 2005*). The traffic demand at the crossing is projected to increase to approximately 105,200 total bridge crossings per day in the year 2030, which is nearly 2.5 times the capacity of the existing bridge. The table below is a summary of the purposes for vehicle trips in the project traffic model study area for 2004.

Vehicle Trip Summary

Trip Purpose	Total Trips / Per Day	Percent Trips	Average Trip Length in Minutes
Home-based work	45,163	21.2 %	10.89
Home-based other	127,560	50 %	8.87
Non-home based	73,354	28.8 %	7.43

The largest proportion of trips (home-based other) are made from Laughlin to Bullhead City for goods and services, including major shopping, car dealerships and repair services, health care, beauty and barber shops, places of worship, child-care facilities, law offices, and other consumer services. This imbalance of services is primarily due to the land-use development patterns on both sides of the river.

Laughlin-Bullhead City Bridge Project Purpose and Need

Laughlin, Nevada and Bullhead City, Arizona are a complementary pair of jobs/housing communities, with Bullhead City providing about 72% of Laughlin's employees. In 2004, there were about 14,000 workers in Laughlin. Bullhead City has little in the way of major employers and Laughlin does not yet provide enough housing to accommodate its workers (*RTCSN-Regional Transportation Plan FY 2006-2030; October 2006*). This produces an existing (and future) imbalance of home-work trips across the bridge.

The existing bridge also carries non-home based trips that include tourist, business, and other trips across the river. Finally, a small proportion of trips are made by tourists not making local stops in Arizona or Nevada before crossing the bridge to a final destination elsewhere.

The dominant vehicle movement (primarily in the morning peak period between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m., but also occurring during swing and graveyard shift changes) is westbound from Arizona, across the existing Laughlin Bridge and then turning left onto southbound Casino Drive in Nevada. The reverse movement occurs during the evening peak period (3:15-4:15 p.m.). With approximately 44,300 total bridge crossings per day occurring on the existing Laughlin Bridge in 2004, the existing bridge and the area street system is functioning at level of service F (the worst traffic operating condition). Long wait times increase air pollution, waste fuel, and contribute to user costs of travel. These poor traffic operating conditions will further deteriorate over time as the number of crossings is projected to increase by over 135% by 2030.

Land Use and Socioeconomic Growth

Laughlin, Nevada had a population of 7,076 in the year 2000 U.S. Census and the population is currently estimated at 8,629 persons (*Clark County Department of Comprehensive Planning-Southern Nevada Consensus Population Estimate; July 2006*). However, the Colorado River Commission (CRC) is transferring approximately 4,561 additional acres to Clark County on July 1, 2007, for privatization in Laughlin, which will enable major additional development capacity. In addition, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) plans to dispose of approximately 2,689 acres for privatization in Laughlin. The availability of these areas for private development will substantially increase opportunities for growth, with associated traffic, in and around Laughlin.

Bullhead City, Arizona had a population of 33,769 in the year 2000 U.S. Census and is estimated at 39,930 persons (*Arizona Department of Economic Security; 2007*). Mohave County, where Bullhead City is located, experienced 66 percent growth in population between 1990 and 2000, due to the availability of affordable retirement housing, commercial growth, and the presence of Laughlin with nearby employment opportunities.

The population, dwelling unit, and employment estimates for 2004 and 2030 within the project traffic model study area is summarized in the following table, which indicates that the total population of the region is expected to increase by more than 235% by 2030. Traffic is likely to also increase at a substantial rate.

Laughlin-Bullhead City Bridge Project Purpose and Need

Year 2004 and 2030 Population, Dwelling Unit and Employment Data

Location	Year 2004			Year 2030		
	Population	Dwelling units	Employees	Population	Dwelling units	Employees
Laughlin / Clark County	7,297	2,810	13,967	21,601	12,222	23,237
Bullhead City	32,099	17,760	8,105	40,741	22,461	12,217
Laughlin Ranch	-	-	-	29,566	13,882	1,889
Mohave County	10,666	4,789	1,485	27,082	17,074	5,952
Total*	50,062	25,359	23,557	118,990	65,639	43,295

*Note: Within project traffic model study area boundary

Access to and Delivery of Emergency Services

There is a definite lack of alternative routes in the Laughlin/Bullhead City area. Since the Davis Dam Road crossing is permanently closed to traffic, the only detour route available instead of the existing bridge is the Aha Macav Bridge on tribal lands at the northern limits of Mohave Valley. This alternate route adds 14.5 miles and considerable time to a one-way trip between the two cities across the Laughlin Bridge. An additional bridge that is appropriately located would improve response times for emergency vehicles.

When the existing bridge is blocked due to accidents, stalled vehicles or substantial traffic jams, emergency medical attention is compromised and public safety threatened. This is particularly critical for injured persons needing urgent medical attention located in the northwest part of Laughlin on the Nevada side of the river since they must be transported to the Western Arizona Regional Medical Center, located on Silver Creek Road, in Bullhead City, Arizona. Traffic issues on the existing bridge also impede deployment of other emergency services such as fire fighting engines and equipment.

Vehicle crashes interfere with the typical traffic flow across the existing bridge and often result in closures and lengthy delays. Between October 2000 and September 2003, 164 crashes occurred on the existing Laughlin Bridge and adjacent roadway intersections (Nevada Department of Transportation and Arizona Department of Transportation traffic studies). This is a higher rate, nearly double that of crash incidents than in the surrounding intersections.