










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Panel OKs Loop 202 plan

MAG group approves extension through Ahwatukee, South Mountain Park

by [Cathryn Creno](#) - Oct. 22, 2009 12:00 AM
The Arizona Republic

A Maricopa Association of Governments committee on Wednesday evening approved a controversial plan to extend Loop 202 for 22 miles through Ahwatukee Foothills and South Mountain Park, connecting Chandler to Laveen with an eight-lane freeway.

Despite opposition from Ahwatukee Foothills residents, environmental advocates and about two dozen residents of the Gila River Indian Community, the MAG Transportation Policy Committee voted unanimously in favor of the planned \$1.9 billion South Mountain Freeway. Plans call for it to start at Interstate 10 at Pecos Road and end at I-10 and 59th Avenue and be finished as soon as 2017.

After listening to about an hour of testimony in Phoenix both for and against the extension, Mesa Mayor Scott Smith moved that the committee approve the plan.

"The reality is we are in a Valley that has grown tremendously," Smith said.

"We have a freeway system that dumps tens of thousands of cars into the middle of our city. None of the solutions are perfect, but as a region we have needs that can't be ignored."

Next Wednesday, the MAG Regional Council is expected to give final approval to the plan. After that, it is to be forwarded to the Arizona Department of Transportation, which will study the environmental impact of the path for the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration.

Proponents of the freeway extension say it would help alleviate traffic congestion on Interstate 10 and West Valley arterial streets.

"We need to build the freeway," said west Phoenix resident Wes Lines, one of three people at the meeting who spoke in favor of the 202 extension. "Fifty-first Avenue has gotten so busy it can't handle all the traffic."









But many in Ahwatukee oppose the extension through their community and South Mountain Park, saying it would destroy homes and a church and bring noise and pollution to remaining neighborhoods. A committee of Ahwatukee residents organized by Phoenix City Councilman Sal DiCiccio recently has urged MAG and ADOT officials to see if the Gila River Tribal Council would allow Loop 202 on its land.

Gila River members who spoke at the meeting pointed out that their Tribal Council has twice passed resolutions against the freeway.

"I know that Ahwatukee residents are upset about losing the serenity of their area," said Linda Allan, who lives on the Gila River Reservation.

"What about our land? We have been there for hundreds and hundreds of years," she said. "I don't think my grandparents and great-grandparents went through what they went through to have a freeway put onto their land."

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Nick Oza/The Arizona Republic

Eric Hardy holds up signs opposing the South Mountain Freeway extension through Ahwatukee Foothills on Wednesday before the MAG Transportation Policy Committee's vote in Phoenix.



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