

New South Mountain Freeway plan upsets some in Phoenix

17 comments by [Cathryn Creno](#) - Feb. 11, 2010 02:20 PM
The Arizona Republic

West Phoenix residents this week got their first look at revised plans for the South Mountain Freeway - which would connect Chandler to Laveen with an eight-lane 22-mile roadway.

The reaction?

"It stinks," said Lilly Ong, who raised her family and hoped to spend her retirement years in a home near Roosevelt Street and 59th Avenue. "My place is for sale."

Ong was among about 70 people who attended the meeting, which included residents who live near the planned freeway path and representatives from the Arizona Department of Transportation, the [Maricopa Association of Government](#) and the Federal Highway Administration

The last time freeway planners met officially with west Phoenix residents, plans called for a 10-lane extension of Loop 202 from Interstate 10 in west Chandler to 55th Avenue in west Phoenix.

But plans have changed over the last year because of the decline in sales tax revenues, said ADOT spokesman Tim Tait.

"Sales tax revenues have been down," Tait said. "The half-cent [sales tax](#) (that funds freeway expansion) has been seeing significant declines. That means there is less funding to construct the projects we are

building."

Ending the freeway at 59th instead of 55th Avenue would [save money](#) because Phoenix owns the right-of-way along 59th, Tait said. The state could simply move utility lines and use the land for free, he said.

Another advantage, Tait said, is that the new route is farther away from a large petroleum storage facility at 51st Avenue and Van Buren Street.

Constructing a smaller freeway - eight lanes instead of 10 - also would [save money](#), he said.

The downside?

The new plan calls for demolition of 64 houses south of Roosevelt Street and east of 59th - instead of 48 homes projected previously. Also, the freeway would take out 680 apartment units that before would have been untouched.

Area [homeowners](#) voiced concerns about being reimbursed fairly for property that might be demolished by the freeway. They also expressed fears about increased noise,

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traffic and pollution around their homes.

The concerns sounded similar to those that have been raised at meetings in Ahwatukee, where more than 100 homes in the freeway path are expected to be destroyed. No one at the meeting expressed support for the planned \$1.9 billion freeway.

"I see a lot of older people who have established their family homes. Are they going to get a fair shake?" said David Fultz, an Ahwatukee Foothills resident who attended the meeting to encourage west Valley residents to organize against the Loop 202 extension.

He passed out the e-mail address southmtnloop202@yahoo.com to west Phoenix residents and urged them to get involved.

"If they don't join our group, they should create their own," he said.

Tait said told residents it is possible the Loop 202 extension could be constructed on the Gila River Indian Community. But he cautioned them not to count on it.

"It is important to note that the tribe is opposed to any construction on the free - on or off the reservation," he said, "The formal position of the tribe has not changed."

He said ADOT is about to complete an environmental impact study of the planned freeway path for the federal government. Public hearings on the study will be held this summer and in the fall, he said.

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