

South Mountain Freeway: Tribe reviewing alternative map

by **Cathryn Creno** - Jan. 20, 2011 05:49 AM
The Arizona Republic

The Maricopa Association of Governments and the Gila River Indian Community have released a map of an alternative route for the planned South Mountain Freeway, which would connect Chandler to Laveen.

See map below story

The planned \$1.9 billion extension of Loop 202 would link west Phoenix to Chandler with a 22-mile, eight-lane freeway.

Tribe members are reviewing the alternative route and voicing views during meetings this month. The Gila River Tribal Council could vote on the alternative route as soon as February.

If approved by the tribe, the new route would run south from 51st Avenue in Phoenix past Pecos Road and onto Gila River land. It would connect with the eastern edge of Loop 202 just beyond 48th Street and Pecos Road.

Most of the route would be one-quarter to one-half mile south of Pecos Road, said MAG senior **engineer** Robert Hazlett.

Hazlett said the new route would be an at-grade freeway with exits at 51st Avenue, 17th Avenue, Desert Foothills Parkway, 24th Street and 40th Street. There also would be wildlife crossings at 51st and 17th avenues.

"It's a big step in the right direction," said Mike Hinz, a member of the Ahwatukee Foothills Village Planning Committee and the Arizona Department of Transportation South Mountain **Citizens** Advisory Team. "The impact of a half-mile south (of Pecos) is pretty significant. It will be a good buffer."

The current route calls for the freeway to run southwest from 59th Avenue, requiring the destruction of three mountain ridges in the preserve, then along Pecos Road in Ahwatukee.

The Pecos route would take out a church and more than 100 **homes** in Ahwatukee. Ahwatukee residents also have complained that the Pecos Road route is too close to five schools.

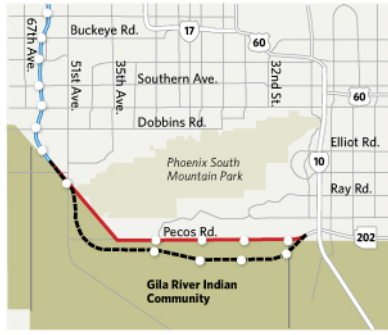
The Gila River alignment would be on flat, undeveloped land.

If the freeway is built on tribal land, the Arizona Department of Transportation would still be in charge of its construction and funding for it would still be managed by the Maricopa Association of Governments, Hazlett said.

S. Mtn. Freeway options discussed

The Gila River Indian Community is discussing whether to allow the South Mountain Freeway, the southern leg of Loop 202, to run on tribal land about a half-mile south of the proposed Pecos Road alignment. The tribal route would bypass the South Mountain Preserve.

-  Pecos Road alignment
-  Gila River Indian Community alignment
-  59th Avenue alignment
-  Proposed interchange



Source: Maricopa Association of Governments

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