



## Construction on Loop 202 could begin in 2013

By [Doug Murphy](#)

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Construction could begin on the South Mountain Loop 202 as soon as 2013, a planner for Maricopa County said Thursday night.

Bob Hazlet, a senior engineer with the Maricopa Association of Governments, which does freeway planning for the county, delivered that estimate during a meeting of the South Mountain Citizens Advisory Team.

But there remain questions over how MAG has cut the scale of the freeway to meet a \$6.6 billion budget deficit for freeway construction.

Changes from the \$2.5 billion estimate in 2008 include reducing the size from 10 lanes to eight and realigning the route to follow 59<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the west, cutting the cost down to \$1.9 billion.

For Tim Lank, the cuts all come down to the Arizona Department of Transportation saddling Ahwatukee Foothills with a second-rate freeway.

"This is the Wal-Mart freeway. It's going to be at ground level instead of below grade," said Lank, who lives in Ahwatukee Foothills and doesn't look forward to sound walls 20-feet high.

"What did you call it? The Great wall of Pecos," he said.

The tentative timeline, according to ADOT spokesman Tim Tait, shows public hearings on a draft Environmental Impact Statement sometime this fall.

"That's making assumptions that we're on the track we're on now," Tait said. One major change could be if the Gila River Indian Community were to consider allowing a freeway on tribal land south of Pecos Road.

Nathaniel Percharo, a member of the tribe and the SM CAT, said he was under the impression the tribal government would be sending a letter soon to invite ADOT to review possible routes that skirt major ridges in South Mountain that the tribe considers sacred.

But he also conceded there was opposition to the idea and that any route would need to be approved by the community, probably at the November general election.

The next meeting of the SM CAT will be in March where changes to the original plans will be discussed.

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