

184 homes in South Mountain Freeway path, planners say

by **Cathryn Creno** - Mar. 30, 2010 07:32 AM
The Arizona Republic

State freeway planners have been meeting regularly with representatives from the Gila River Indian Community about the possibility of building the planned South Mountain Freeway on tribal land instead of through Ahwatukee and South Mountain Park.

But Arizona Department of Transportation spokesman Tim Tait told the South Mountain Citizens Advisory Team Monday that the state still is going ahead with planning for an Ahwatukee freeway.

He said he expects public hearings to be held on preliminary plans for the freeway - an extension of Loop 202 from Chandler to west Phoenix - in early 2011.

"GRIC is still formally opposed to the freeway," Tait told the advisory panel, which is made up of representative of business groups and [homeowner](#) associations that would be affected by the South Mountain Freeway.

"We are not going to stop and wait for a decision from GRIC."

On the other hand, Tait said, planning of the proposed \$1.9 billion freeway is expected to go well into 2011.

And if an alignment that would prevent the state from blasting ridges in the South Mountain Preserve is developed, the state could opt to go with it instead.

"We are required to avoid building in the park preserve if we feasibly and reasonably can avoid it," he said.

Also discussed at the meeting were how many homes would be taken out by the freeway if current plans for an eight-lane freeway materialize - and how the state is coming up with appraisals for the homes that would be in the way.

Officials say 120 single-family homes in Ahwatukee and 64 in west Phoenix would be purchased by ADOT and leveled to make way for the freeway under the present plans for a eight-lane 202 extension.

"This isn't right," west Phoenix resident Henry Martinez said at the meeting after hearing that ADOT is doing appraisals on homes in the freeway path right now.

He said he has been told that his home will be knocked down if the 202 extension is built as currently planned. But he believes he would have received much more money had ADOT done the appraisal a few years ago.

"It's not my fault that the [economy](#) dropped and I lost \$100,000 on my house," Martinez

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said. "My house is worth less now than I paid for it."

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