

Ahwatukee

Rep

Aug 5

# Phoenix council won't determine freeway route, but MAG will develop plan

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THE REPUBLIC | AZCENTRAL.COM

The construction of the proposed South Mountain Freeway extension along Pecos Road has emerged as a key issue in the race for the Phoenix City Council District 6 seat.

How much say would a Phoenix council member actually have in the debate over whether to build a state freeway in Ahwatukee Foothills and through the South Mountain preserve?

Officially, none.

"There is absolutely no city vote on it, and there will be no city vote," Phoenix City Councilman Sal DiCiccio said. "The freeway is not under the jurisdiction of the city."

The Maricopa Association of Governments is charged with coming up with the plan and funds for the freeway extension, which would connect Loop 202 from Chandler to west Phoenix. The Arizona Department of Transportation will conduct required federal environmental studies and, once plans are approved, build the freeway.

Still, state and local officials say Phoenix has plenty of indirect influence on the matter.

"The freeway is not a done deal," said Timothy Tait, community relations for the state transportation department.

"Phoenix does have a lot of influence. Not with Phoenix City Council per se, but through MAG. Phoenix has a major influence through MAG."

DiCiccio, who faces three challengers in the Sept. 1 election for his seat, said that is why the freeway issue surfaced as a hot issue in a recent candidates forum sponsored by the Ahwatukee Foothills Chamber of Commerce.

"MAG does make the final determination on whether the freeway is built," DiCiccio said. "But that does not mean the city of Phoenix and I cannot be a forceful voice in the conversation."

The latest plan for the extension of Loop 202 calls for an eight-lane 22-mile freeway through Ahwatukee and the South Mountain preserve.

The cost would be \$1.9 billion and con-

## Proposed Loop 202/ South Mountain Freeway

**Year proposed:** 1983.

**Proposed size:** Eight lanes including three lanes in each direction plus two carpool lanes.

**Proposed length:** 22 miles, starting at Interstate 10 and Pecos Road and ending at I-10 and 59th Avenue.

**Proposed exits:** Desert Foothills Parkway, 24th Street, 40th Street, 23rd Avenue and 17th Avenue.

**Projected cost:** \$1.9 billion.

**Projected start of construction:** 2017.

**Online:** View the draft of the Maricopa Association of Government's latest proposal for the South Mountain Freeway at [www.mag.maricopa.gov/detail.cms?item=10445](http://www.mag.maricopa.gov/detail.cms?item=10445).

Source: Maricopa Association of Governments

struction could begin by 2017, said MAG transportation director Eric Anderson. There has been no public discussion of the latest freeway plan. The MAG Regional Council and the MAG Transportation Policy Committee have copies of the draft and will meet for a discussion in October.

In March, MAG planners proposed building a 45-mile-per-hour parkway for Ahwatukee's section of the proposed South Mountain Freeway. That plan replaced an earlier proposed 10-lane freeway.

The so-called Arizona Parkway would have been an eight-lane roadway and a pattern of routing traffic turning left into a system of U-turns every 1/8-mile.

That proposal did not satisfy Ahwatukee residents who want no freeway extension at all, Anderson said.

Also, he said, there were concerns that a parkway would lengthen travel time for