DiCiccio seeking freeway alternative

By DOUG MURPHY
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It may be too little too late, or it could be the perfect win-win-win, either way, Councilman Sal DiCiccio thinks that Arizona should make a good faith offer to the Gila River Indian Community to consider allowing the South Mountain Loop 202 on tribal land before construction begins along Pecos Road.

So far, the tribe has twice passed resolutions opposing a freeway on tribal land. But DiCiccio is optimistic that if a real proposal is put on the table, they will consider it.

Councilman Sal DiCiccio's (left) Loop 202 committee includes local residents and business owners, like Rick Savagian (right), owner of Mountainside Martial Arts.

DiCiccio has formed a committee of local residents to lobby for a "concrete" proposal.
through a corner of South Mountain Park and then north to Interstate 10 near 55th Street.

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), which oversees the Valley's transportation projects, is set to vote this month on the revamped Loop 202 plan as a priority project in the Valley's transportation system.

Getting ADOT and MAG to change directions and consider an alternate route, even if a deal could be put together involving the federal, state and county governments, could be difficult.

"Their actions show a predetermined," to follow the original 1985 plan despite growth and development in the area, said Chad Blostone, a member of DiCicco's group and a member of the Pothills Homeowners Association.

"They've never had a desire to seek alternatives."

But Rick Savagian, another member of DiCicco's team, said that master plans can, and often do, change during the planning process.

"It's (ADOT's and MAG's) duty to explore every opportunity," he said Tuesday.

While MAG and ADOT now consider the freeway a top priority for funding and construction, the history is an up and down roller coaster of strong and weak support.

Freeway history

Designed in the mid-1980s as a way to move people and products around the Valley, the South Mountain Loop 202 was quickly put on the back-burner when construction funds ran low. The city of Phoenix proposed a parkway around the mountain, but that was rejected by ADOT. Then some entrepreneurs attempted to generate support for a toll road, but that also fizzled.

ADOT brought the project back to life in 2001, forming a Citizens Advisory Team to make suggestions on updating the old 1985 plan and take into account the rapid growth in Ahwatukee Pothills and on the west side in Laveen. But when the team recommended one route, based on two years of study, then ADOT director Victor Mendez chose the original 1985 route and one out of every three advisory team mem-

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