



Questions remain on blasting into South Mountain

By [Doug Murphy Ahwatukee Foothills News](#)

2009-11-11 11:09:13

Editor's note: This is the second in a three-part series on some of the questions yet to be answered on what impact construction of the South Mountain Loop 202 will have on local residents.



While there is a possibility that the South Mountain Loop 202 may end up being built on Gila River Indian Community land, at this point, planners are focusing on the original route along Pecos Road.



And that means blasting through two major ridges of South Mountain in the park, which the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) considers sacred and parks and preserve supporters consider off-limits to freeway builders.



"It has burial sites, archeological sites and shrines," said Shannon Rivers, a member of GRIC.

For Laurie Riddle, an environmental activist on the reservation, South Mountain is sacred, and she would oppose any effort by the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) to cut into the ridges.

"When they talk about blasting the mountain, it hurts," she said.

"It's totally going to change the area and people don't realize that," Riddle said.

According to ADOT, which has been meeting with tribal representatives to seek alternatives, the state will be careful when it comes to constructing the freeway, but since it's not on tribal land, the GRIC doesn't have any veto authority.

But the Phoenix Mountains Preserve Council may have a little more luck when it comes to stopping the state from blasting through the ridges.

They point to a 1985 vote by Phoenix residents amending the city charter Chapter XXVI Section 2 to read: "In no event shall any real property within any City Mountain Preserve be sold, traded or otherwise alienated, redesignated or deleted from the Mountain Preserve except by approval of a majority of the electors voting thereon, provided that Mountain Preserve property may be traded if such trade is approved by the Council by ordinance prior to January 1, 1989 in accordance with the provisions set forth in this Chapter."

And a state law passed in 1990, House Bill 2218, also says cities can't transfer preserve land for freeways with a vote.

Supporters of the freeway point out that ADOT had plans for the freeway on paper before the vote and that the council did OK a freeway through the corner of the park, while opponents say it would still require a city-wide vote.

"In Phoenix, to try to go around provisions to have the voters decide, would be unconstitutional and un-

American, as a completely wasted effort,” said David Gironda, a member of the Phoenix Mountains Preservation Council. “If they do waste extensive funds pursuing an improper freeway route, ADOT and MAG (the Maricopa Association of Governments) should be held accountable for their malfeasance and be subject to judicial actions.”

© Copyright 2010 Freedom Communications. All Rights Reserved.
[Privacy Policy](#) | [User Agreement](#) | [Site Map](#)