

## MAG weighs Loop 202 alternative

### Parkway through Ahwatukee less costly

by Cathryn Creno - Mar. 28, 2009 12:00 AM

The Arizona Republic

Construction of an eight-lane parkway instead of a freeway through Ahwatukee Foothills and South Mountain Park could save millions and possibly prevent destruction of hundreds of homes, Maricopa Association of Governments officials say.

Ahwatukee residents and others have battled plans for a proposed 10-lane freeway for more than five years. The proposal calls for extending Loop 202, which now ends in Chandler, through Ahwatukee and the park to west Phoenix.

MAG transportation director Eric Anderson and senior engineer Robert Hazlett said earlier this week that one new alternative being studied is called the Arizona Parkway. It would have four lanes in each direction, a speed limit of 45 miles per hour and a pattern of routing traffic turning left into a system of U-turns every one-eighth mile.

Hazlett said the U-turns would keep traffic moving smoothly because no lights or stop signs would be involved. He said the design

has been used successfully in Michigan since the 1960s.

MAG planners announced in January that they were studying parkway options because state freeway planners had begun looking for ways to balance a \$5.3 billion shortfall in the state's 20-year transportation plan.

A parkway, which would accommodate 100,000 to 120,000 vehicles per day, would cost \$40 million to \$60 million per mile to build, officials said. A freeway, which could carry 280,000 vehicles per day, would cost \$107 million per mile.

Another plus would be that a parkway requires less land, Hazlett said. Fewer and possibly no houses would have to be destroyed, he said.

Present plans call for the destruction of 250 to 500 homes that are in the freeway path.

In addition, Hazlett said, a parkway potentially could have more exits to Ahwatukee neighborhoods and to development on the Gila River Indian Community, which is building a new hotel and casino near Loop 202 and Interstate 10.

Anderson said MAG's Transportation Policy Committee likely will review the Arizona Parkway along with four or five other options and recommend one by summer.

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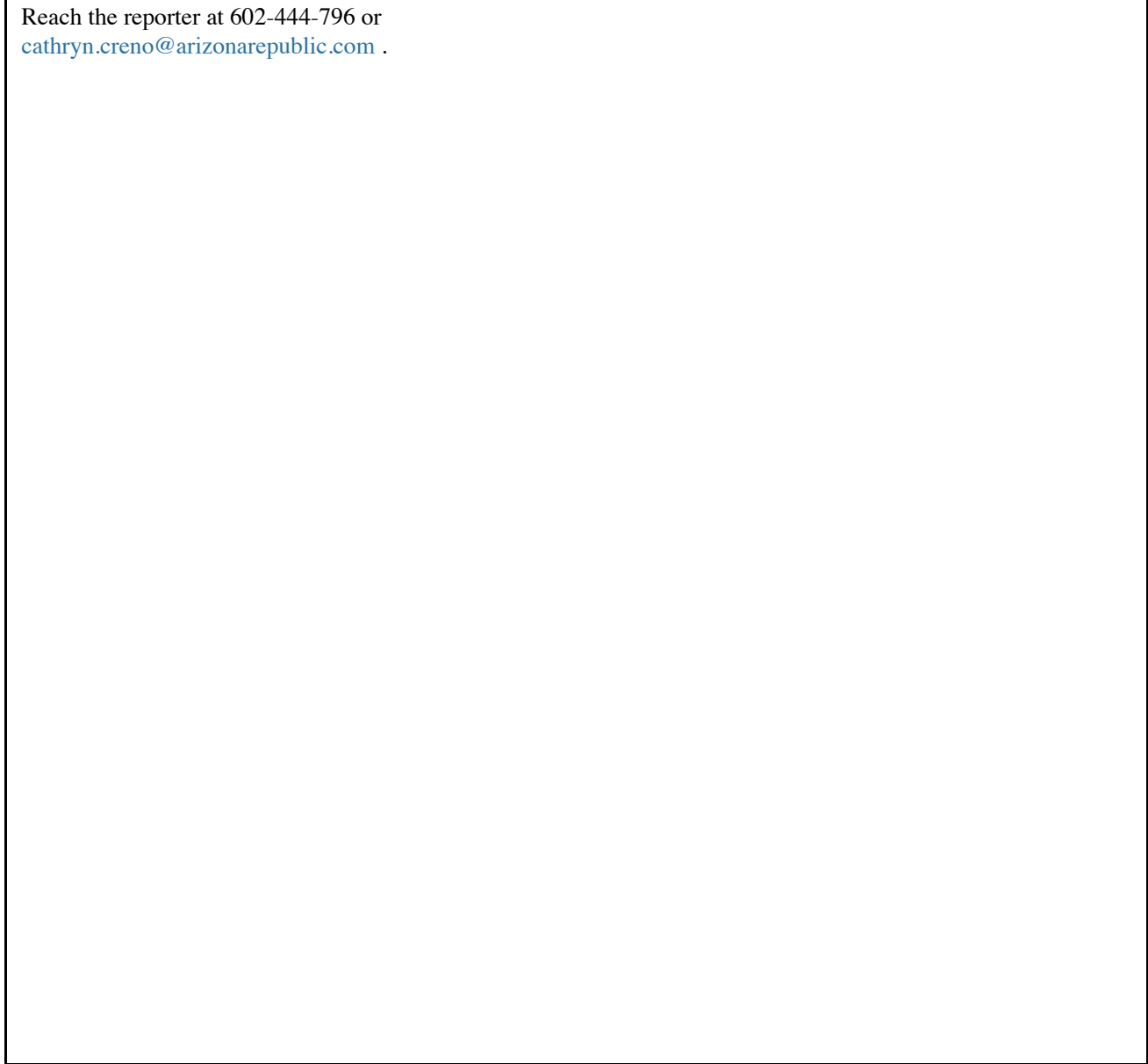
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