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## Phoenix mayor a hit at March 6 town hall

By Doug Murphy

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Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon (left) holds a town hall meeting at Pecos Park Community Center March 6. Transportation was a big topic: "I don't support it built on Pecos Road," said the mayor about the South Mountain Loop 202. (Doug Murphy/AFN)

If the questions asked by residents at Tuesday night's town hall meeting with Mayor Phil Gordon are any indication, transportation seems to be on the minds of most Ahwatukee Foothills residents.

The mayor was asked about:

- South Mountain Loop 202 – "I don't support it built on Pecos Road," and Gordon hopes that an agreement can be reached with the Gila River Indian Community so that the freeway can be constructed south of Pecos.
- South Mountain Park – said the city can't give the Arizona Department of Transportation land for a freeway without a vote of the city, but that the state can use its power of eminent domain to take the land – "There is no bottom line in law; that's why we have courts and judges."
- On traffic congestion – "We need to build more freeways, but in the right places."
- Expanded mass transit – "Yes, we should be doing a lot more," Gordon said, including looking at expanding RAPID and ALEX services in Ahwatukee Foothills as revenues grow. The city has already begun looking at possible expansions of the light rail in all four directions out of central Phoenix, but "it won't be tomorrow."
- Bicycle safety – "A sign may not seem like a lot but it does catch people's attention," Gordon said of new bicycle safety signs the city will begin installing later this month along roadways.

Gordon has been in Ahwatukee Foothills meeting with people before, but the town hall was his first large-scale event and drew about 80 people to the Pecos Park Community Center. Virginia Morton, a local activist, liked the mayor's detailed answers to questions.


"For a first-time town hall it was informative; he took the time to really answer questions," she said. "I'm looking forward to more."

Gordon was also asked about the city's stance on illegal immigration. "Our officers are arresting the bad guys," said Gordon, "illegal or citizens, here for weeks or here for decades."

Last year, he said Phoenix police arrested and locked up 2,800 illegal immigrants for felonies.

But Gordon also made it clear that police will investigate crimes and won't be searching restaurant kitchens looking for people's work papers. "I know it's frustrating, but don't go for simple sound-bites," Gordon told the crowd. "Make the federal government do its job."

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Gordon focused much of his time discussing Phoenix's future, from creating cutting-edge job opportunities to focusing on education and the quality of life to keep Phoenix competitive in the global economy.

Afterwards Melanie Pai handed out membership forms for Protecting Arizona's Resources and Children (PARC), which is opposed to the Loop 202 Freeway near local schools and who appreciated the mayor's opposition to a 10-lane freeway on Pecos Road.

"We need to leave a legacy of responsible planning," Pai said.

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