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Avondale backs Pecos freeway route

Council members cite absence of alternatives

David Madrid

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The Avondale City Council was given a choice this week: Support the Pecos Road alignment for the eastern leg of the South Mountain Freeway or support not building the freeway at all.

That's because the South Mountain Citizens Advisory Team will have to recommend a final "build" or "no-build" solution based on available alternatives for the South Mountain Freeway. Now, no viable alternatives exist to the Pecos Road alignment.

Avondale Councilwoman Betty Lynch said the Pecos Road alignment is the only option.

"To not build it is no option at all," she said of the freeway.

The council agreed with Lynch.

"We definitely need to build it, and if they come up with an alternative, that's fine, too," Mayor Marie Lopez Rogers said. "But it does need to move forward one way or another. Where does the 801 tie to if it doesn't tie to that (South Mountain Freeway)?"

The proposed Arizona 801, also called the Interstate 10 Reliever, would run parallel to and south of I-10, and north of the Salt and Gila rivers. It would connect the proposed South Mountain Freeway to the proposed Loop 303.

Vice Mayor Charles Wolf also supported the Pecos Road alignment.

"This freeway and freeway connection have a lot of great benefits for Avondale," he said.

In 1985, Maricopa County voters approved funding for a regional freeway system, including the South Mountain Freeway connecting I-10 south of Phoenix with I-10 in the West Valley.

The state Transportation Board approved an alignment for the South Mountain Freeway in 1988, running east and west along Pecos Road and then turning north between 55th and 63rd avenues.

But because of a funding shortfall, ADOT was unable to develop 76 miles of planned freeways, including the South Mountain segment.

Since 2001, the Arizona Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration have been working with the Gila River Indian Community to determine whether a portion of the freeway could be located on tribal land south of Pecos Road.

So far, the Gila River community has not approved any options for further study. Therefore, the options left are the Pecos Road alignment or not building the South Mountain Freeway.