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San Pedro River Valley Project Off The Table

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In a surprise move, the State Transportation Board has voted to remove the San Pedro River Valley as a possible alternative for a highway bypass around Tucson.

Members of the Arizona State Transportation Board unanimously approved a motion to drop the idea in a meeting Friday due to the area's sensitive eco-system.



Arizona transportation officials are continuing their plans for a possible Interstate 10 bypass around Tucson. While many people were happy the transportation board took the San Pedro route off the table, others say, that's one down and four to go.

Four other possible bypass routes remain, including the one which seems to have some support through Avra Valley, Arizona. Another route talked about Friday would run from Casa Grande south along the existing I-10 corridor. There are still many who think the bypass idea itself, should not be pursued. Randy Serraglio from The Center for Biological Diversity says, "they're looking at the future and seeing a sea of cars and billion dollar highways and we're seeing other solutions. There's 21st century solutions for these problems rather than 20th century mistakes."



The State Transportation Board has been holding hearings all across Arizona taking public testimony on all the bypass routes. Opposition has run nearly one-hundred-percent against.

"I want to challenge this commission to reject this bypass boondogle, according to Daniel Patterson, the southwest director of the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility.

"I urge you to drop this study and look at more progressive ways to facilitate transportation", says Sean Sullivan of the Sierra Club.

Opposition against the San Pedro Valley has been so intense at each of these meetings that the board listened to the concerns of the environmentalists and local politicians.

"A victory for the citizens of Cochise County whom I'm here to represent. The San Pedro corridor was not a corridor supported by the Cochise County Board of Supervisors. Not an area anyone in the environmental community supported," says Paul Newman, a member of the Cochise County Board.

Tucsonan Si Shorr, who sits on the transportation board, says it is all a planning stages right now and may not be built in his lifetime, but it would be irresponsible not to plan for it.

"You cannot get hurt by planning, you can get hurt by not planning. Southern Arizona has paid quite a price over the years for not doing all the planning it could have done or should have done in regards to transportation, " he says.

These proposals are part of five proposals being studied to allow cross-country trucks and other long-distance traffic to avoid Tucson.



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