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## **Initial work to start in center stretch of South Mountain Freeway corridor** *Part of 3-mile segment will pass through edge of South Mountain Park*

PHOENIX – Crews are set to begin initial work on the 3-mile stretch at the center of the Loop 202 South Mountain Freeway that will provide a direct link between the West Valley and East Valley.

Construction in the Center segment, which is located between 51st Avenue and 32nd Lane and includes a section passing through the southwestern edge of the South Mountain Park, also will create five multi-use crossings and multiple drainage structures.

Crews have already started creating right-of-way fencing and surveying to identify and tag trees and cactuses in the path of construction that are good candidates for salvage. Over the next few months, hundreds of plants that eventually will be replanted along the freeway will be removed and placed in a temporary nursery.

Beginning this week, crews with heavy equipment will start assessing the condition of soil and rock as well as the depth of groundwater along the freeway alignment. These geotechnical investigations, which occur on every freeway expansion project, allow engineers to plan for pavement, bridges, walls and drainage structures.

This work, which will require building temporary access roads, is scheduled to continue for several months.

Starting as early as May, controlled rock blasting will begin along two ridges on the southwestern edge of the South Mountain Park to break large rock into smaller, more manageable pieces as crews create a path for the freeway.

Periodic traffic restrictions are anticipated on 51st Avenue, Dusty Lane and Ivanhoe Street during Center segment construction.

The largest single highway project in Arizona history, the South Mountain Freeway has been divided into four construction segments:

- **I-10 Papago:** between the I-10 Papago Freeway interchange at 59th Avenue and Lower Buckeye Road
- **Salt River:** from Lower Buckeye Road to 51st Avenue near Estrella Drive
- **Center:** from 51st Avenue to 32nd Lane

- **Pecos:** between 32nd Lane to the I-10/Loop 202 Santan Freeway interchange along Pecos Road

The South Mountain Freeway will provide a long-planned direct link between the East Valley and West Valley and a much-needed alternative to I-10 through downtown Phoenix. Approved by Maricopa County voters in 1985 and again in 2004 as part of a comprehensive regional transportation plan, the South Mountain Freeway will complete the Loop 202 and Loop 101 freeway system in the Valley.

You can learn more about the South Mountain Freeway project and sign up for updates and weekly traffic alerts by visiting [SouthMountainFreeway.com](http://SouthMountainFreeway.com).

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