



# GATES PASS AREA NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

*"Our Mission is to act in the interest of the members on issues such as limiting commercial development, reducing litter and crime, and retaining environmental quality."*

August 8, 2021

Dear (Political Leaders),

The membership of the Gates Pass Area Neighborhood Association (GPANA) strongly encourages you to oppose the approval and construction of the Avra Valley route for the I-11 freeway.

GPANA was established in 1987 and currently has 200+ members who work to keep our neighborhood and the surrounding natural environment clean and safe. You can learn more about our group at <https://www.gpana.info/home.html> Many of our members live, work, and/or play near the proposed Avra Valley route under consideration for the new I-11 interstate freeway.

The devastating impacts our GPANA members and allied organizations have discussed include:

- The construction of a freeway through the Avra Valley will have detrimental impacts on irreplaceable nearby resources like the Arizona Sonoran Desert Museum, Saguaro National Park, Tucson Mountain Park, Ironwood Forest National Monument, and the City of Tucson's water storage facilities.
- Construction of the Avra Valley route cannot help but have negative impacts on native plants and animals caused by, among other things, vehicle emissions, roadway runoff, soil and water degradation, and the spread of invasive plants like buffelgrass and Sahara mustard. Additionally, biologists are just beginning to document the significant effects of noise and light pollution on the natural environment, not to mention the degradation of the dark night sky for the Kitt Peak Observatory (currently shielded from downtown Tucson by the Tucson Mountains).
- The draw to our area for residents and tourists has been the amazing landscape and wildlife. The Avra Valley route will impact the wildlife corridors and connectivity between our many local, tribal, county, and state parks. Replacing the scenic views across the Avra Valley with a busy freeway, gas stations, and other urban sprawl, will destroy the natural environment and make wildlife more scarce, thereby reducing tourism and the desire of residents to continue to live in the area.
- It is GPANA's understanding that the volumes of passengers and freight traveling from Nogales to Canada is exceptionally low, and this traffic could be accommodated on existing right-of-ways, or better yet, served more efficiently by rail.
- The Avra Valley route will create tremendous incentives for the development of private land throughout the corridor for residential and commercial uses. The long-term secondary impacts from this development will be even more harmful than the highway itself.

Finally, construction of the I-11 freeway through Avra Valley ignores the historic Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, Pima County's award-winning plan for balancing conservation and protection of our cultural and natural resources with the economic growth of the community. The Gates Pass Area Neighborhood Association strongly encourages you to act! Our members actively contribute to and campaign for local elected officials on both sides of the city boundary, as well as our state and national representatives.

Please oppose the Arizona Department of Transportation's approval and construction of the I-11 interstate freeway through the Avra Valley.

Respectfully,

Denise Garland, President

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