



Friends of Saguaro National Park

Providing financial and volunteer support for Saguaro National Park



Resolution

A Resolution of the Board of Director for Friends of Saguaro National Park in opposition to construction of an Interstate 11 corridor alignment through the Avra Valley.

Whereas Saguaro National Park was established in 1933 to protect the giant saguaro cactus, and preserve superb examples of the Sonoran Desert ecosystem, while affording unique recreational opportunities for visitors... and today, Saguaro National Park is the number one tourist destination in southern Arizona, providing an economic impact of approximately \$75 million per year to the Tucson community: and

Whereas the Arizona Department of Transportation is considering and “Interstate 11 and Intermountain West Transportation Corridor” as a means of increasing regional economic development by linking trade with Mexico and Canada: and

Whereas the Pima County Administrator has suggested that the proposed Interstate 11 should include a 56-mile section between Casa Grande and Green Valley that would run directly through the Avra Valley, adjacent to Saguaro National Park: and

Whereas the suggested corridor would negatively impact thousands of acres of protected public lands, including Saguaro National Park, Ironwood Forest National Monument, Tucson Mountain Park, and the Central Arizona Project’s Tucson Mitigation Corridor: and

Whereas this suggested corridor would cut through sensitive habitat recommended for protection by Pima County’s landmark Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan... sever critical wildlife movement corridors, and effectively block all animal migration from the Tucson Mountains to the west... disturb an unknown number of important archeological sites... impede washes and negatively impact surface water flows... and aggravate the spread of invasive plants; and

Whereas this suggested corridor would degrade the visitor experience at Saguaro National Park by eliminating the natural quiet... destroying the scenic viewsheds... threatening the survival of native wildlife species... and polluting the air in a national park that is afforded additional federal protections by the Wilderness Act of 1964: and

Whereas this suggested corridor would bi-sect the 2,514-acre Tucson Mitigation Corridor of the Bureau of Reclamation- nullifying the purpose for which it was preserved- and would be contrary to management guidelines that explicitly prohibit any development on these lands: and

Whereas this suggested corridor would be contrary to Pima County's long-established, consistent public policies to preserve open space, protect native wildlife habitat and movement corridors, and conserve the Sonoran Desert ecosystem: and

Whereas this suggested corridor would be contrary to the purposes for which the Tucson Mountain District of Saguaro National Park was established in 1961- to protect these lands "unimpeded" for future generations to enjoy: and

Whereas the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection (of which Friends of Saguaro is a member organization) has questioned the need for any new southern Arizona corridor between the Mexican border and Phoenix- preferring expansion or upgrades to existing transportation alignments:

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Board of Directors for Friends of Saguaro National Park expresses its firm opposition to the suggested Interstate II corridor through the Avra Valley and calls upon the Arizona Department of Transportation to drop all further consideration of this route.

Approved by the Board of Directors January 9, 2014.