

June 13, 2024

The Honorable Katie Hobbs, Governor of Arizona
1700 W. Washington St.
Phoenix, AZ 85007

RE: Oppose West Option of Interstate-11, support East Option instead

Dear Governor Hobbs,

The Tucson Mountains Association (TMA) is a 501(c)(4) organization founded in 1934 that represents thousands of residents in the Tucson Mountains. Our mission is to preserve open space, protect biodiversity, and promote the well-being of residents in the area. The western foothills of the Tucson Mountains flow down into Avra Valley where the West Option of the I-11 Freeway is proposed. It contains Saguaro National Park West, Ironwood Forest National Monument, Tucson Mountain Park, The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, and Old Tucson, all of which are significant engines of tourism and revenue for Arizona.

We deeply appreciate all the hard work and visionary thinking that you have displayed for Arizona. However, residents and local governments across Southern Arizona are dismayed at the prospect of I-11 being built in our backyard when **a more viable East Option already exists**, where I-11 would co-locate with I-19 and I-10 through the Tucson area. The Tucson City Council, Pima County Board of Supervisors, Tohono O'odham Nation, Pascua Yaqui Tribe, and Town of Sahuarita all oppose the West Option. Congressman Raúl Grijalva said, "I along with hundreds of my constituents remain opposed to any highway that results in widespread environmental destruction to areas in Avra Valley including Ironwood Forest National Monument, Saguaro National Park, Tucson Mountain Park and Tribal lands."

The West Option comes within 0.3 miles of Saguaro National Park, one of the crown jewels of Southern Arizona tourism. Over 1 million people visit Saguaro National Park each year, generating nearly \$100 million per year, with more than 98% of this economic output coming from non-local visitors. Building a highway right next to this national treasure would ruin the experience and decrease attendance and revenue. In 2021, the U.S. Department of the Interior wrote that the West Option would cause "un-mitigatable impacts" that would "substantially diminish the recreational experiences sought by the public in these areas." The nearby Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum brings in another 400,000 people each year. Their visitors would not appreciate a noisy highway as the backdrop to their world-class outdoor exhibits. Tucson Mountain Park and adjacent reserves and campgrounds attract thousands of bicyclists, campers, and hikers as well. Likewise, the light pollution would negatively affect nearby Kitt Peak National Observatory, a global astronomy hub that attracts tourists from all over the world and needs dark skies. **Why put all of this at risk when there is a perfectly viable East Option available?**

The people of Southern Arizona and their local leaders are counting on you to take us into a new era of Arizona. The West Option of I-11 is a \$10 billion relic from the Brewer and Ducey administrations. Building a highway right next to our National Park and the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum would ruin their appeal and hinder our tourism economy. We urge you to **eliminate the West Option** and instead consider the East Option to co-locate I-11 with I-19 and I-10.

Sincerely,

Ed Hendel
President, Tucson Mountains Association