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FREEWAY

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE SOUTH MOUNTAIN FREEWAY LOOP 202 PROPOSAL
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NOT 25 YEARS AGO NOT NOW!

CURRENT STATUS OF THE SOUTH MOUNTAIN FREEWAY PROPOSAL

For more than 25 years, the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) has been pushing the notion of the South Mountain Freeway Loop 202 on communities within and surrounding Phoenix, Arizona. Loop 202 began in 1983 as an idea of the Maricopa Association of Governments' (MAG) Regional Freeway System's planning committee. The committee proposed a 10-lane freeway to connect eastern and western segments of I-10 in the metro Phoenix area. Due to a lack of funding, the freeway has had a mean streak of push-backs. Even amongst the flooding of funds from both the United States Department of Highway Funding and ADOT, the 202 freeway project has been consistently underfunded. So much so that in 2009, MAG scaled back their original plans to an eight-lane freeway

Currently, construction of this freeway is at a standstill. ADOT, in conjunction with the Gila River Department of Transportation, has most recently been putting pressure on Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) residents to accept the freeway. At a December 2010 meeting at Gila River, the freeway proposal was presented as if it were past the point of a "no build" option. Then, at a later meeting, ADOT and GRIC spokespersons admitted that not building the freeway was still an option.

It is important to note that not even the planning of this freeway has ever stayed on schedule. However, if all goes according to ADOT's present schedule, GRIC will take a vote on the 202 freeway in January 2011. Pre-vote, GRIC and the Gila River council must first decide how to make the vote: by council vote, referendum or initiative. It is still a bit vague as to why the proposed freeway is only being presented to the Community as "GRIC must decide on/endorse a preferred alignment".

One of the largest missing links in ADOT's current push for the freeway is that their Environmental Impact Statement Report (EISR) process is unfinished, and is estimated by members of GRIC's Transportation Technical Team to be only about 15% complete. Why would ADOT pressure GRIC to make such a decision on the freeway without knowing the environmental impacts first? What is the purpose of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process?

From the ADOT Freeway Loop 202 online library:

"An Environmental Impact Statement presents information as to how a proposed project and its alternatives may affect the natural and built/social environment. Elements of the natural environment that are often studied include air quality, wildlife and wildlife habitat, water resources, and wilderness. Elements of the social/built environment that are often studied include farmlands, history and archeology, noise, parks and recreation, communities, and aesthetics. "

Is the Gila River Indian Community not important enough to be given ample time to make their decision with a fully complete EIS process? ADOT notes that members of the Gila River Indian Community are to be included within their study.

From the ADOT Freeway Loop 202 online library:

"The project team will also continue to meet with village planning committees, service organizations, homeowners associations, other neighborhood groups throughout the study area, and the *Gila River Indian Community*."

GRIC originally opposed the freeway through an official resolution in 2000. Then in 2005, the Community reaffirmed their stance by re-adopting their resolution against construction of the 202 freeway. ADOT has repeatedly acknowledged that GRIC has sole authority when it comes to even studying a proposed freeway going

through the Gila River Indian Community, let alone approving any freeway on their land. Asking members of the Gila River Indian Community decide on the freeway without the facts on how they will be affected is unfair.

From the ADOT Freeway Loop 202 online library:

“GRIC has sole authority to decide if and where a freeway might be studied or built on its land. Therefore, if an eastern preference must be identified without GRIC alternatives, options would include either the Pecos Road alignment or not building the South Mountain Freeway.”

The expected release date for the EIS was fall 2010. It is now projected to be released sometime in 2011. Once the EIS is released, there will be at least 90 days for the public to review the results of the study. During that comment period, only one public hearing will be held on the contents of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. From the results of the draft EIS, a “final” EIS will be released and there will be an additional 60 days to review that.

On Endangered and Threatened Species

Another concern surrounding the construction of the freeway is the threatened and endangered species that exist within the natural ecosystems of Gila River and South Mountain. Numerous studies have proven that the two main reasons for species decline are habitat loss and negative interaction

The Gila River is home to the spikedace and loach minnow, which are both federally threatened species. Two federally endangered species, the Gila topminnow and the desert pupfish, also have their habitats in the Gila River. The fact that the habitat of these species of fish could be under attack should be taken seriously. According to the Arizona Game and Fish Department, of 36 fish species historically native to Arizona, 21 are listed



as threatened or endangered, and one species has already gone extinct.

The riverine areas are also home to mountain lions and the threatened Mexican Spotted Owl.

South Mountain itself is home to many special animals that thrive on its unique ecosystem. The entire species of the common chuckwalla has been determined “threatened” and its existence is considered sensitive. There are only two other known areas that the chuckwallas live.

The construction of this freeway would also unavoidably disrupt Indigenous sacred places. Many of the mountains in the South Mountain range are sacred ancestral homelands to the O’odham people, who are indigenous to that area. Many sacred and medicinal plants rely on these ecologically threatened areas for their existence.

This information has been researched to help others learn more about MAG’s proposed South Mountain Freeway Loop 202 project. There are an abundance of more reasons why one could oppose this freeway. We recognize that the access to knowledge on this freeway is hard to access. It is also obvious that the reasons to oppose the freeway are not going to be handed to us, so hopefully the information here makes it easier to inform you on some details of the proposed freeway.

TIMELINE OF THE FREEWAY

Another Trade Corridor of the Future...

Unless We Stop it Now!

1983: The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) prepares planning studies for the Phoenix metropolitan area that identify corridors for an integrated freeway network. The South Mountain Transportation Corridor is defined as a roughly two-mile wide corridor from I-10 near 51st Avenue, around South Mountain, to I-10 near Chandler Boulevard.

1985: Maricopa County voters approves funding for the MAG's Regional Freeway System which included a South Mountain Freeway connecting Interstate 10 in the Southeast Valley with Interstate 10 in the West Valley.

1988: The State Transportation Board approves an alignment for the South Mountain Freeway running east and west along Pecos Road and then turning north to connect with I-10 West near 55th Avenue.

1990: April 9, HB 2218 is signed into law during a public signing ceremony. Its purpose being to prohibit state or any subdivisions from building highways within the Mountain Preserve without voter approval.

From the bill:

"A charter city shall not sell, trade, or otherwise alienate, re-designated mountain preserve except by approval of a majority of the electors voting thereon"

1994: Due to a funding shortfall, ADOT identifies 76 miles of planned freeways as "unfunded segments" and later drops some of those segments from the system. The South Mountain Transportation Corridor is designated for potential development as a toll road.

1995: Freeway put on hold once again due to a lack of funding.

1996: A consortium of private companies proposes to build the South Mountain Freeway as a toll road. The consortium would later withdraw its proposal, saying the project was not financially feasible. The South Mountain Transportation Corridor remains a part of the MAG Regional Freeway System but designated as "unfunded."

1996: Also in 96 the "Borderlands Study" an internal GRIC study is authorized by the Community.

1998: The Borderlands Study is approved by the GRIC council. The results of the Borderlands study are then used to develop the "GRIC alignment".

1999: April the State Legislature passed SB1201 which provided State Infrastructure Bank (SIB) funding to assist in financing the acceleration of the Regional Freeway Program by the end of 2007. Governor Jane Dee Hull, ADOT and MAG have prepared plans to complete the Regional Freeway System by the end of 2007 using innovative financing alternatives.

1999: ADOT announces plans to accelerate the completion the entire Regional Freeway System. The accelerated plan included a portion of the South Mountain Freeway.

2000: ADOT starts Citizens Advisory Committee to help update the original 1985 plan.

2000: In anticipation of initial construction of the South Mountain Freeway, ADOT starts a Citizens Advisory Committee to help update the original 1985 plan. Also the City of Phoenix conducts a local study of Ahwatukee Foothills area transportation needs that includes an assessment of freeway options.

Also in 2000 the Gila River Indian Council (GRIC) creates a resolution against South Mountain Freeway.

2001: ADOT buys land in Laveen. This would be the first time they buy land within the proposed South Mountain Freeway route.

2001: ADOT begins preparation of a new Location/Design Concept Report and EIS to examine a broad range of alternatives to the 1988 South Mountain Freeway concept.

Summer/Fall 2001: The South Mountain Corridor Team collects base information and issues on the transportation corridor.

Fall/Winter 2001: South Mountain Corridor Team determines that there is a purpose and need to continue the EIS study.

2001: ADOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) began the updated study through an EIS to determine if such a freeway is still needed to meet the needs of the traveling public, where it should be located, and what the environmental, social and economic effects of such a roadway might be. The updated EIS was required due to the many changes in the study area since the original 1988 Environmental Assessment was completed.

2002: January, the ADOT planning process is once again restarted.

2003: During the fall ADOT, FHWA, and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers concur on the Alternatives Screening. Three build alternatives plus options are carried forward into the EIS for more detailed analysis.

2004: Fall, voters approve additional funding MAG's Regional Transportation Plan – including South Mountain Freeway.

2005: GRIC re-passes a resolution against the freeway.

2006: In June, ADOT announces the W55 (55th Avenue) Alternative as the “preliminary preferred alternative” based on community input, economic impacts, and traffic information.

2006: District six councilman Sal DiCiccio paid by ADOT consultant to persuade GRIC to accept ADOT's proposals to build a freeway on GRIC land.

2007: Public information meetings are held throughout the year to communicate with and receive input from members of the community.

2007: During the month of April, GRIC designates South Mountain as a sacred place/traditional cultural property.

2007: Councilman DiCiccio enters into an agreement with GRIC to develop 75 acres at the Pecos and 40th St. intersection.

2008: ADOT purchases an 84 acre gravel yard at 59th Ave. & Broadway for \$15 Million with the help of Sal DiCiccio.

2008: A Study conducted by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality and Arizona State University shows correlation between particle pollution and asthma related absences at nearby schools.

2009: MAG updates the Regional Transportation Plan. The revised plan includes reducing the South Mountain Freeway's footprint to eight lanes with a connection to I-10 at 59th Avenue.

2009: In March ADOT delays a decision on the route.

2009: During the fall, MAG approves \$1.9 Billion for the Freeway (despite protests).

Also on December 19, Jan Brewer sends a letter to Governor Rhodes encouraging a path for the freeway on GRIC land.

2010: January 28, the South Mountain Citizens Advisory Team meets for first time in 14 months.

Feb 1, 2010: GRIC sends letter to ADOT saying their open to freeway on GRIC land.

**WE UNDER ATTACK...
ITS TIME TO FIGHT BACK!**

March 2010: ADOT puts their alignment decision on hold till 2011.

March 29, 2010: South Mountain Citizens Advisory Team meets.

April 2010: Congressman Peter DeFazio Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Highways and Transit (D-Ore) given tour by ADOT.

July 2010 – ADOT & TTT report on alternative routes on GRIC nearly finished.

November 2010: David Schweikert (R-Congress) comes out in opposition of freeway going through Ahwatukee

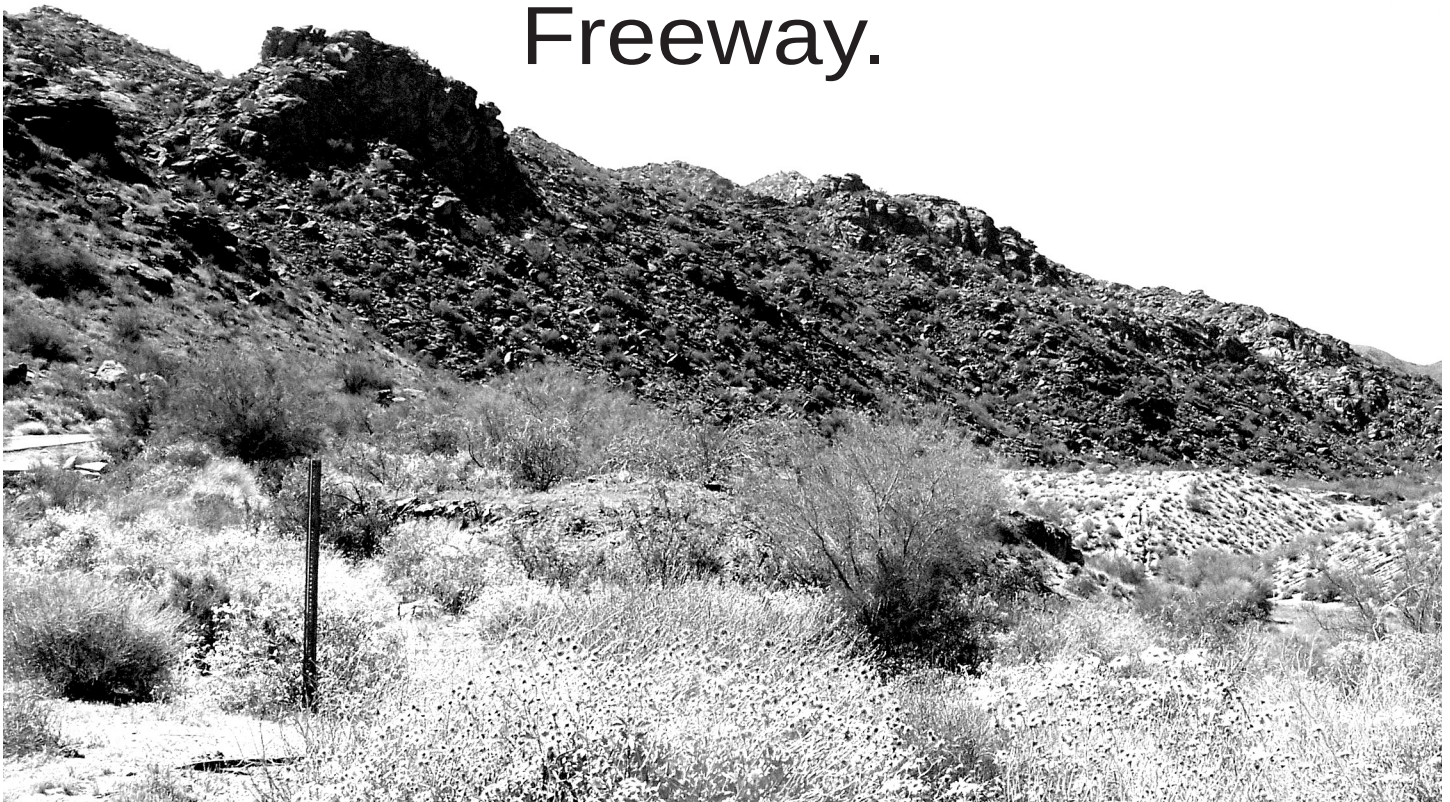
Dec 2010: GRIC announces that Tribal Council vote to be in January 2011.

2011: Draft EIS and public hearings are expected to occur following a final review of the document by the Federal Highway Administration. Final decision on the South Mountain Freeway will follow the release of the Draft EIS and public hearings and comment.

GRIC has sole authority to decide if and where a freeway might be studied or built on its land.

Therefore, if an eastern preference must be identified without GRIC alternatives, options would include either the Pecos Road alignment or....

not building the South Mountain Freeway.



10/21/09 SOUTH MOUNTAIN FREEWAY ACTION REPORT!

By: O'odham Solidarity Across Borders Collective

Shap Kwoj,

Today, a coalition of grassroots peoples from the Gila River Indian Community, and fellow supporters came to voice their concerns about the proposed Loop 202 Extension on or near tribal land.

O'odham Solidarity Across Borders Collective, Gila River Alliance for a Clean Environment (GRACE), Phoenix Class War Council, fellow tribal members, and concerned citizens took action against the Maricopa Associations of Governments (MAG) Transportation Policy Committee by attending the public comment meeting today.

The action was organized because we, the O'odham Solidarity Across Borders Collective feel that our voice, the O'odham/Pi'Posh voice, was left out of any discussions of any freeway route that would disturb our communities. We feel that we needed to bring our voice to this meetings because politicians such as Phoenix Councilman Sal DiCiccio and U.S. Representative Harry Mitchell suggested that the South Mountain Freeway should be built on Gila River land. Politicians that are so clearly disconnected with Akimel O'odham/Pi'Posh people, that they refer to us as "Gilas". But still advocate for measures that would displace our communities, and disturb our O'odham Him'dag.

We, in solidarity, told the committee that we firmly oppose the entire South Mountain Freeway route, and if any route is finalized, it would be off tribal land. This route would signal the destruction of Ahwatukee and West Phoenix residents' houses, in addition to destroying a portion of South Mountain clearing the way for the route. This will leave the Gila River Indian Community, specifically District 6 and 7 open to the many environmental and noise hazards that freeways bring, but most importantly, desecrate the many sacred sites on the mountain.

Our efforts were not just being heard inside the MAG buildings, but also seen outside with banners demonstrating our opposition.

The Transportation Policy Committee thankfully ended the idea of placing the route on Gila River itself, but did vote to finalize the route along the reservation boundary.

Now the finalized route must be voted on and approved by the MAG Regional Council this upcoming Wednesday October 28th, and then forwarded to the Arizona Department of Transportation where it will face an environmental impact study, public comments, and the many bureaucratic checks before any construction starts.

Meaning, it will provide us, the O'odham/Pi'Posh people, and our many supporters time to organize on a larger scale against this freeway. We are disappointed with MAG's current plan to continue with this project, but were not surprised they ruled the way they did. We do take victory that it will not be on the reservation, and that this action brought us all together to oppose the current proposal in days/months/years to come. This action today brought our voice to the debate. We are here, and we must take the right measures to attack this freeway and to build solidarity with all those who oppose it.

This is a call to our Ahwatukee, Laveen, West Phoenix brothers and sisters who feel the same as we do about the destruction that this freeway will bring.

This is also a call to our community to work in solidarity, with all those who we are sure to meet, to defeat it. Today, is a call to action.

We, the O'odham Solidarity Across Borders Collective will oppose this freeway to end. But we will need everybody's help to make this happen.

We would like to thank all those who came out and supported. We will keep everybody informed of next weeks MAG Regional Council Vote.

Sappo.

THERE IS NO FREEWAY OUT OF THIS MESS

By: Phoenix Class War Council

I think the most interesting part of the action is the call out to other affected and oppositional communities, including the white folks in Ahwatukee, who will now face an interesting conundrum: will they organize in solidarity with native folks or will they assert their reactionary white privilege? The dare that OSABC puts to them is exactly the kind of thing that we at PCWC think more anarchists ought to be doing. Their fanatical, yet open-handed, call out has the potential to polarize, and in so doing, to force white folks to choose a side on the issue.

At the same time, OSABC has put a clear demand out there: no to the freeway, anywhere. This serves to bookend the call for solidarity and in no uncertain terms offers a way out for all opposing it that doesn't involve shifting it onto other people's neighborhoods and land. If we stop it entirely, then no one gets fucked over.

In the end, if white folks in particular hope to protect themselves from the noise and other environmental and health problems that will arise from the new road (not to mention the dislocations that would follow in its wake), they would do well to seek allies where they can, and to join those who have already staked out a position. They can look to others who, perhaps until now, they saw as facing different conditions or struggles, and now begin to see common ground. If this happens, then the cross class alliance of white supremacy will have been, at least temporarily, undermined, and this advances the class war.

Focusing on the freeway also has the potential to highlight the general misery of suburban living under capitalism. After all, what does a further extension of the freeway really mean? More suburbs? More time in cars? A commute to an empty job? A lifeline to the decaying exburbs? Families held together by nothing more than little Jimmy's baseball schedule? Or Janie's dance lessons?

In a real way, the expansion of the freeway system is a symptom of the miserableness of life in late capitalism and stopping it would necessarily send a message that we reject a life where everything is disconnected. Where no one lives where they work. Where our work is a factory for the reproduction of and commodification of boredom and ritualized humiliation. Where among life's most distinctive features are depression, isolation and cheap facsimile. Where social mobility is dead but freeway mobility lives, securing our yawning shuffling from home to work or the grocery store and back again. Where gloom and heartache are every day's weather report.

The age of oil is coming to an end. While it reigned, it facilitated capitalism's insatiable desire to remake and isolate us. To tear apart our families and affinities, leaving us naked to its predations, and in the process spewing us across continents to land into cookie cutter tan stucco houses. Meanwhile our grandparents die in institutions far away and our high school friends do whatever they do (not that we would know), since we couldn't possibly keep in touch with them in any meaningful way from here. Our social networks record our social collapse. Our friends lists are populated by work "mates" and bosses. So many of us have nothing real.

The car is a noose and the freeway is the scaffold. Together, we can smash this miserable road we're on and make good our escape. Not one more mile.



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SUPPORTING RESISTANCE TO THE SOUTH MOUNTAIN FREEWAY LOOP 202

By: Survival Solidarity

One infrastructure project that we need to prevent from ever being built is the South Mountain Freeway Loop 202. The Freeway Loop is still in the pre-Environmental Impact Statement phase. Aside from the obvious unneeded destruction that looms close behind the pavement of any highway, the 2 current proposals for the freeway would be sinking its teeth into the Ahwatukee South Mountains, and ultra-sensitive areas around the Gila River.

The Freeway would be an extension of the Interstate-10 (I-10) trade Corridor of the Future. The two proposals for the highway would either go through the Gila River Reservation or through the Ahwatukee foothills.

Both proposals are clear examples of colonialism destroying anything that stands between capitalism and its profits. If state bureaucrats involved in Phoenix transportation planning have their way, this will be yet another example of eradicating sacred natural lands in the Sonora desert from Phoenix to Tucson.

The US government has been attempting to award grants to states for the construction of roadways that lessen congestion and aid in the transportation of goods. The US Department of Transportation says, "Congestion is one of the single largest threats to America's economic prosperity and way of life." Corridors of the Future such as I-10 are their solution to this problem. The Corridors of the Future are the roadways that will facilitate the movement of goods for Trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). According to the US Department of Transportation (DOT), traffic congestion is responsible for \$200 billion in economic losses each year in the US alone.

As the Zapatistas did we need to resist every attempt of the state to further colonize and destroy what is natural and sacred. Freeway 202 would not only tear apart indigenous communities on the Gila river Reservation or in the Ahwatukee foothills, it would further colonize and exploit people in Central and Southern America.

Many people would be affected by this road, and the time to talk to them is now. Using tactics such as the Listening Project model could be one of those ways. If a route for this highway is decided on, talking to those that the proposed highway would relocate and communicate what our support for them could look like would be one of the first steps to creating fertile resistance to this infrastructure project. Some of them may feel alone, and if they have people to talk to and help them sort out there options it may be easier for them to defend their homes.

Meetings are ongoing for freeway 202 and every other part of the I-10 Corridor; having a strong presence at these meetings is a must. City meetings often leave those involved feeling extremely alienated by the state's complete dismissal of concerns raised by those affected by their projects. The state hardly ever provides ample time for everyone that goes to actually say what's on their mind. Being present to listen to people who are affected can help assist them in finding their place in resistance to the road

Starting early to develop a strong network of supporters could aid those that are attempting to defend their land from the possibility of a highway in the future. Gaining a strong support base can also help provide the means of support for those that choose to attack and take action against the road.

From here on out we only gain more and more targets. It should be our goal to turn anyone in favor of this road against it. Anyone actually providing the energy, planning and resources for this road is definitely a target. Whether capitalist figure or business, personal or political, the tactics exist for swaying people to either neutralize our enemies or possibly become active opponents to this road.

It is necessary to consider both the strategic benefits and negative ramifications before blindly taking action. Definitely think about whether or not your actions would support or hurt Indigenous people affected by this

project. Also, be sure to analyze how your actions can be the most inclusive and be the best use of your resources. Some of the first obvious actions are engaging in dialogue with groups like O’odham Solidarity Across Borders about strategy. An important part of our strategy to attack needs to be exploiting every weak point of State Transportation planners. Fortunately the economy is far from flourishing. If this road does get approved the building of it will probably be privatized. Whoever those companies might be that put bids in should find out fast that we are not going to allow them to build this road.

The South Mountain Freeway Loop 202 is a frivolous idea that should never be built. A large first step in the fight against this road is helping support the Solidarity Across Borders Collective and elders around the from the Salt River area by asking what support for resistance to this highway would look like. We should also work our hardest to meet those that are already opposed to this road and try our hardest to help them and provide support where it is needed. Preventing this road from being built is an act of confronting colonization and directly cutting off the growth of capitalism through the expansion of it’s infrastructure. Lets work to support each other in defending this sacred land. The time to attack is now!

