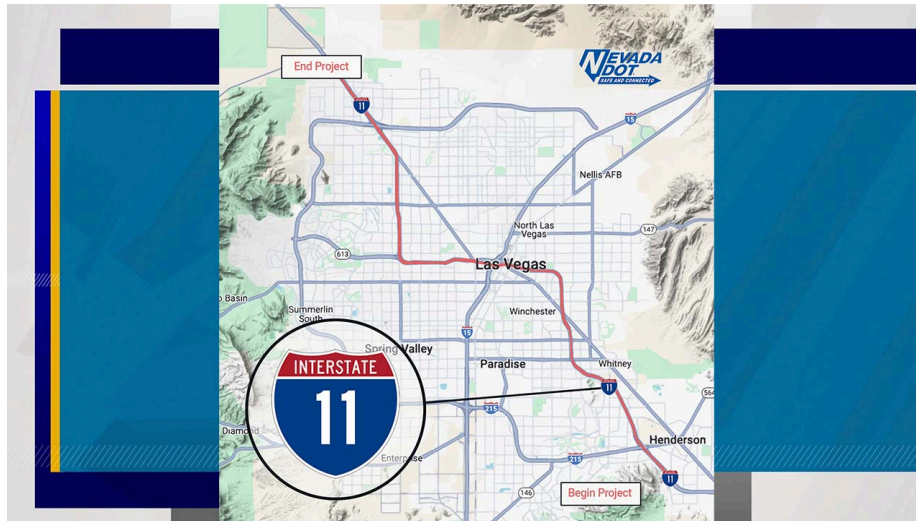


# I-11 signs going up as NDOT updates highway's name

 [8newsnow.com/news/local-news/i-11-signs-going-up-as-ndot-updates-highways-name](https://8newsnow.com/news/local-news/i-11-signs-going-up-as-ndot-updates-highways-name)

Greg Haas

October 21, 2024



LAS VEGAS ([KLAS](#)) — The signs will still carry the U.S. 95/U.S. 93 designators, but you can just call it I-11.

A yearlong project begins this month to replace more than 1,000 sign panels — 1,075 to be precise — along Interstate 11 from the Henderson Interchange to Kyle Canyon Road. The Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) expects to complete the project by fall of 2025.

You might have already noticed the change if you use online services like Apple Maps, Google Maps and Waze. [8 News Now reported early changeovers](#) when they were spotted in June.



(Nevada Department of Transportation)

The highway was officially designated as I-11 by the Federal Highway Administration nearly a year ago, on Nov. 24, 2023. The I-515 designator is going away.

NDOT said the project will have “minimal” impact on traffic, with “brief” overnight traffic stoppages on I-11, I-15 and I-215 during sign replacements.

“The new signage supports the I-11 corridor’s goal to improve north-south travel and boost the regional economy by easing the flow of goods,” according to an NDOT news release on Monday. “NDOT is currently conducting a feasibility study to identify improvements necessary for converting U.S. 95 between Kyle Canyon Road and Mercury Highway into a fully access-controlled interstate highway. This study builds on the 2018 I-11 Northern Nevada Alternatives Analysis, aiming to refine past recommendations and guide future development.”


While adjustments have been in place in the Las Vegas valley, converting the road to an interstate highway will take more time in Arizona and in rural Nevada. Bypasses, exits and overpasses will be necessary to meet FHA standards for an interstate.

“Once completed, I-11 is expected to serve as a vital link between Mexico and Canada, supporting economic growth and connectivity in Nevada and the Intermountain West region,” the news release said. “NDOT’s efforts to advance this project align with long-term g

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# Interstate 11 planning work in AZ halted after lawsuit over species

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 [azcentral.com/story/news/local/arizona-environment/2025/01/23/arizona-interstate-11-planning-work-halted-after-lawsuit-over-species/77888344007](https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/arizona-environment/2025/01/23/arizona-interstate-11-planning-work-halted-after-lawsuit-over-species/77888344007)

## Transportation agencies agree to halt Interstate 11 planning in Arizona over environmental issues

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Jan. 23, 2025, 6:02 a.m. MT

Federal and state transportation agencies will halt planning activities for a proposed 280-mile highway between Nogales and Wickenburg in response to a lawsuit brought by conservationists.

The U.S. District Court in Arizona on Wednesday stayed the case brought by conservation groups after the Federal Highway Administration and Arizona Department of Transportation agreed to reevaluate the Interstate 11 project's compliance with environmental laws.

The proposed I-11 highway will connect to Las Vegas but could eventually span from Mexico to Canada.

"The interstate's approval was based on a deeply flawed environmental analysis that the Federal Highway Administration now has a chance to fix," Russ McSpadden, Southwest conservation advocate at the Center for Biological Diversity, said in a news release. The center is a plaintiff in the lawsuit. "I hope this agreement will make sure the agencies stop ignoring community concerns about the highway's threats to plants, wildlife, people and the climate."

The Arizona Department of Transportation confirmed in a written statement that the agency will work alongside the federal highway agency to reevaluate the environmental impact statement in accordance with federal regulations.

The transportation agencies are considering two route options for the Pima County portion of the highway: one eastern option running along the existing Interstate 10 and one western option that would construct the roadway through undeveloped desert around Saguaro National Park and the Ironwood Forest National Monument.

Among the concerns raised by the environmental groups was the project's failure to consider the harm to threatened and endangered species, including the cactus ferruginous pygmy owl.

The small brown desert owls were listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 2023 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, after the transportation agencies had completed the environmental review for the I-11 project. The owl subspecies is threatened by habitat fragmentation, urbanization and climate change, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The conservation groups say the project will also harm other protected species such as the western yellow-billed cuckoos, Yuma Ridgway's rails and southwestern willow flycatchers

"This is an important step toward holding the Federal Highway Administration accountable for the environmental and legal violations tied to Interstate 11," said Tom Hannagan, board president of Friends of Ironwood Forest, a group acting as a plaintiff in the lawsuit, in a news release. "We won't stand by and watch our beloved Sonoran Desert be destroyed."

After the agencies complete the environmental review, they will open a 60-day public comment period.

Wild Arizona: [An endangered bat species has been found in Arizona with the help of citizen scientists](#)

*John Leos covers environmental issues for The Arizona Republic and azcentral. Send tips or questions to [john.leos@arizonarepublic.com](mailto:john.leos@arizonarepublic.com).*

*Environmental coverage on azcentral.com and in The Arizona Republic is supported by a grant from the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust.*

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# Environmental lawsuit forces pause on Arizona's I-11 highway expansion plan

 [azfamily.com/2025/01/22/environmental-lawsuit-forces-pause-arizonas-i-11-highway-expansion-plan](https://azfamily.com/2025/01/22/environmental-lawsuit-forces-pause-arizonas-i-11-highway-expansion-plan)

Peter Valencia

January 22, 2025

**TUCSON, AZ (AZFamily)** — Arizona's plan on a new highway that would span between [Nogales](#) and [Wickenburg](#) is going through another hurdle as part of an ongoing dispute from conservationists.

The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and The Federal Highway Administration have agreed to halt planning plans amid concerns about threats to endangered species, public lands and water.



Photo of proposed "West option" for I-11. (Russ McSpadden / Center for Biological Diversity | Russ McSpadden / Center for Biological Diversity)

“The interstate’s approval was based on a deeply flawed environmental analysis that the Federal Highway Administration now has a chance to fix,” said Russ McSpadden, Southwest conservation advocate at the Center for Biological Diversity. “Interstate 11 would devastate treasured places like the Sonoran Desert National Monument. It also poses grave threats to endangered wildlife like cactus ferruginous pygmy owls. I hope this agreement will make sure the agencies stop ignoring community concerns about the highway’s threats to plants, wildlife, people and the climate.”

The organization says the highway would destroy other protected wildlife as well.

Federal transportation officials will now review the proposed interstate’s compliance with environmental laws and hold a 60-day public comment period.

As [Arizona's Family reported](#), one of the threatened species is the [cactus ferruginous pygmy owl](#), whose climate would reportedly be threatened as part of the highway's construction

"The construction of I-11 and parts of I-11 would require the bulldozing of the Saguaro forests and Palo Verde forests that are the habitat that this owl needs to survive," explained McSpadden during a 2023 interview.

"The Federal Highway Administration's review must be a genuine effort to address the significant environmental harms this freeway would cause," said Kate Hotten, co-executive director at the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection. "The west option must be permanently abandoned to uphold the integrity of Pima County's Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, protect fragile ecosystems like Saguaro National Park, and Pima pineapple cactus."

Interstate 11 is a proposed interstate route to-and-from Las Vegas. It could eventually span from the Canadian border all the way down to Nogales.

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# Arizona HOV lane access ends for alternative fuel vehicles

 [fox10phoenix.com/news/arizona-hov-lane-access-end-alternative-fuel-vehicles](https://fox10phoenix.com/news/arizona-hov-lane-access-end-alternative-fuel-vehicles)

Taylor Wirtz

October 1, 2025

## [Arizona's EV drivers lose access to HOV lanes, tax credits](#)

Starting Oct. 1, about 160,000 Arizona drivers of single-occupant electric and alternative fuel vehicles will lose their ability to use high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes during restricted hours. FOX 10's Taylor Wirtz reports.

### The Brief

- Starting Oct. 1, single-occupant electric vehicles and other alternative fuel vehicles in Arizona will no longer be allowed to use high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes during restricted hours.
- The change, which affects approximately 160,000 registered vehicles, is due to the expiration of a 2005 federal law that previously granted this exemption.

**PHOENIX** - A major perk for some Arizona drivers ends Wednesday, Oct. 1.

What we know:

Alternative fuel vehicles, such as electric vehicles, with only one driver will no longer have access to [high-occupancy vehicle \(HOV\) lanes](#) on freeways during peak hours.

For many drivers, use of the carpool lane was a significant reason to buy an electric vehicle. The change is tied to a [2005 federal law](#) that lapses at the end of September.

A spokesperson for the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) said about 160,000 vehicles are registered for the alternative fuel plate that gives drivers statewide access to the HOV lane.

## [Arizona's alternative fuel vehicle HOV lane perk ends](#)

A perk for Arizona drivers of electric & other alternative fuel vehicles is ending. Starting Oct. 1, single-occupant alternative fuel vehicles will no longer be permitted to use high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes during peak hours on freeways.

What they're saying:

Brian Yelder, a Goodyear resident, said HOV lane access was a big reason he bought his electric vehicle, citing his increased driving time due to the Valley's growth.

He and other drivers said they use the lane every day to get to work.

"Five or, you know, five days, six days a week. This is a big difference," a driver said.

A federal spending and tax bill recently signed into law [eliminated a tax credit](#) for people who lease or buy an electric vehicle.

"It was \$7,500, so a lot of money," said Joel Levin, executive director of Plug in America.

He says September saw a huge increase in EV sales due to those trying to cash in on the credit last minute.

"We heard stories about people standing in line at dealerships last night," Levin said.

While he anticipates a slump in the next few months, he's not worried about EV sales in the long term.

"What we've seen in other countries that have eliminated their incentives is that sales drop off for a couple of months, and then they pick up again and start going steadily," Levin explained.

Dig deeper:

"HOV lanes are available on freeways in the Phoenix metropolitan area. A requirement of two or more occupants is in effect weekdays from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. and from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Other vehicles exempt from occupancy requirements are motorcycles, public transit buses, emergency vehicles used by first responders and tow trucks performing their duties," ADOT explained.

What you can do:

[Click here](#) to learn more about HOV lane use in Arizona.

## **The Source**

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FOX 10's Taylor Wirtz reported on this story using information from ADOT, EV drivers and Joel Levin, executive director of Plug in America.

[TrafficArizonaNews](#)

# Arizona water board approves desalination plants in California, Mexico

KAWWC 68.714 [kawc.org/news/2025-11-20/arizona-water-board-approves-desalination-plants-in-california-mexico](https://kawc.org/news/2025-11-20/arizona-water-board-approves-desalination-plants-in-california-mexico)

Bob Christie

November 20, 2025

[News](#)



PHOENIX -- Arizona will provide taxpayer money to help private companies develop plans for at least two and possibly three desalination plants in California or Mexico under proposals approved by a state agency's board on Wednesday.

The Water Infrastructure Finance Authority board also approved initial development of several other projects from the two applicants that proposed new Arizona water supplies and made it past a lengthy review process. Those proposals would rely on treating wastewater, capturing storm water and storing it underground or making agricultural irrigation more efficient, with the projects located in California, Colorado, Utah or Mexico.

Both the desalination plants and the remaining projects envision trading that new water for Colorado River allocations currently used by those states or Mexico.

The amount of money the state will pay the companies involved to further develop their proposals isn't known;. Instead, the state agency will issue "task orders" in the coming months and

determine how much it will pay for each project to be fleshed out.

And the water won't come quickly: The earliest a proposal could supply any new water is in 2028, but most aim for the early to mid-2030s to begin deliveries.

No cost estimates for the projects were immediately released, but previous desalination proposals were expected to each cost between \$5 billion and \$10 billion to develop.

All told, Arizona's water supplies could be boosted by between 427,000 acre feet and 1.6 million acre feet a year if all the projects were implemented. An acre foot is about 326,000 gallons -- enough water to cover an acre of land one foot deep and typically enough to supply three homes for a year.

The moves by the agency known as WIFA come as the state faces additional cutbacks in its Colorado River supplies and its existing sources of groundwater are stressed to the limit. The unanimous vote by the 9-member board and the release of the proposals mark the first time the public has seen any details of the projects proposed to WIFA over the summer and reviewed in secret by agency staff and by a WIFA committee last week.

Chelsea McGuire, WIFA's executive director, told reporters after the meeting that three years after the Legislature expanded the agency's mission to include finding new water, she was excited to get to the point where the agency is acting to get new supplies.

"These are real projects, this is no longer a hypothetical," McGuire said. "This is no longer something that someone is dreaming of in a room somewhere."

Not considered by the board at Wednesday's meeting was a proposal by water provider EPCOR to import water from a controversial project in the southeastern California desert under development for decades by a company called Cadiz Inc.

Cadiz owns a large swath of remote desert land about 60 miles west of Parker, AZ. The company has worked for more than three decades to tap a large and ancient underground aquifer as a water source for thirsty California cities but has faced fervent opposition from conservation groups and state political leaders.

Environmental groups turned out in force Wednesday to urge the WIFA board not to approve the Cadiz project, only to learn it wasn't recommended for approval by a board committee that reviewed the projects in secret last week.

"That one's over, we're not doing that," board member David Becham said.

What remained were three other projects proposed by EPCOR, which provides water in multiple areas of the state, including San Tan Valley, Sun City and Paradise Valley, and four by a group led by a Spanish company.

EPCOR is proposing a desalination plant in Baja California that would produce between 167,000 and 500,000 acre feet of water per year by 2034 .

The water would be delivered by pipeline to the Colorado River at the U.S.-Mexico border and allowed to flow into Mexico. In return, Arizona would get to take that amount of water out of the river farther north and send it to the Phoenix and Tucson areas through the Central Arizona Project canal.

The other desalination proposals that were OK-ed for funding Wednesday are from a group called the ACCIONA-Fengate Water Augmentation Alliance.

Acciona develops those plants across the world, and Fengate Capitol specializes in infrastructure

investment. Acciona won a contract last December to design and build a desalination plant in Dana Point, Calif.

The partnership actually made two desalination plant proposals, according to one-page project outlines provided by WIFA

Under the first, it would build a new plant in Baja California that would supply 150,000 acre feet of water a year by 2034. The water would be delivered through existing Colorado River water delivery systems or directly exchanged with Mexico for its river allocations.

The second desalination proposal is more general, with the Acciona alliance proposing to use "new or existing" plants in California or Mexico to deliver between 50,000 and 200,000 acre feet of water per year by 2031. That water would be swapped for part of Mexico's Colorado River supply. Both EPCOR and the Acciona group applied for state money to create new supplies in other ways. EPCOR wants to invest and develop projects in California.

It envisions capturing excess runoff in California's Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and other sources and storing it underground for later use. In exchange for that 10,000 to 100,000 acre feet of water per year, Arizona would get part of that state's Colorado River supply.

It also proposes adding a new plant to further treat wastewater from an existing sewage treatment plant near San Diego to drinking water quality in exchange for part of that region's Colorado River supply. It hopes to net between 14,000 and 95,000 acre feet of new water.

The Acciona group has a similar "toilet to tap" proposal, hoping to treat wastewater in Mexico and Colorado to high quality, freeing up between 20,000 and 130,000 acre feet of Colorado River water those areas would normally use.

Acciona also wants to invest in improving the efficiency of irrigation operations in Mexico, California and Utah in hopes of obtaining between 16,000 and 466,000 acre feet of water from those areas between 2028 and 2037.

Ted Cooke, a board member who led the WIFA's board committee that evaluated the projects, said finding and developing new water supplies for Arizona required a private public partnership the board is now embarking upon.

"We need private equity to get this done," he said.

"We need private expertise to get this done," Cooke said while explaining one of his votes. "WIFA cannot operate a plant, WIFA cannot build a plant, WIFA cannot finance this on our own."

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On X: @AZChristieNews

# Arizona Allocates Funds for Desalination Projects in California, Mexico

 [kitchentablenews.org/arizona-news/arizona-allocates-funds-for-desalination-projects-in-california-mexico](https://kitchentablenews.org/arizona-news/arizona-allocates-funds-for-desalination-projects-in-california-mexico)

Editorial Staff

November 20, 2025



## Arizona's Bold Initiative: Funding Desalination and Water Projects Beyond Its Borders

In an ambitious move to sustain its water future, Arizona has decided to allocate taxpayer funds to support private firms in developing desalination plants in California or Mexico. This initiative, approved by the Water Infrastructure Finance Authority (WIFA) board, also includes several other projects aimed at enhancing Arizona's water supplies through innovative means such as wastewater treatment, stormwater capture, and improved irrigation efficiency across several states and Mexico.

The strategy involves trading the newly acquired water for portions of the Colorado River allocations currently utilized by neighboring states and Mexico. While the exact financial commitments remain unspecified, WIFA plans to issue "task orders" in the coming months to assess the cost of each initiative.

Although these projects promise significant water increases, with projections ranging from 427,000 to 1.6 million acre-feet annually, the timeline for water delivery is extended. The earliest possible availability is set for 2028, with most projects aiming for completion between the early to mid-2030s. Previous estimates for similar desalination projects suggest costs could range from \$5 billion to \$10 billion each.

The agency's decision comes at a critical juncture as Arizona confronts further reductions in its Colorado River water supply and strained groundwater resources. The board's unanimous approval marks the first public disclosure of project specifics, which were previously evaluated in

private by WIFA staff and a dedicated committee.

Chelsea McGuire, WIFA's Executive Director, expressed enthusiasm about the agency's proactive steps towards securing new water sources. "These are real projects, this is no longer a hypothetical," McGuire stated. "This is no longer something that someone is dreaming of in a room somewhere."

Notably absent from the approved projects was a proposal by EPCOR to import water from a long-debated project in California's desert, led by Cadiz Inc., which faced strong opposition from environmental groups and political figures. Board member David Becham confirmed, "That one's over, we're not doing that."

Among the approved projects are three proposals from EPCOR and four from the ACCIONA-Fengate Water Augmentation Alliance. EPCOR plans to develop a desalination plant in Baja California, targeting an annual output of 167,000 to 500,000 acre-feet by 2034. The resulting water would be transported to the Colorado River at the U.S.-Mexico border, enabling Arizona to claim an equivalent portion farther north.

The ACCIONA alliance, known for global desalination projects, proposed two plants: a new facility in Baja California providing 150,000 acre-feet annually by 2034, and a more generalized plan using existing or new plants in either California or Mexico to deliver 50,000 to 200,000 acre-feet by 2031. Both proposals aim to exchange water with Mexico's river allocations.

Beyond desalination, both EPCOR and ACCIONA seek state funds for additional water supply projects. EPCOR envisions capturing excess runoff in California and treating wastewater near San Diego to produce drinkable water, potentially adding 14,000 to 95,000 acre-feet annually. Meanwhile, the ACCIONA group aims to treat wastewater in Mexico and Colorado and enhance irrigation efficiency across several regions, potentially securing 16,000 to 466,000 acre-feet annually.

Ted Cooke, a WIFA board member, emphasized the vital role of private-public partnerships in developing new water supplies for Arizona. "We need private equity to get this done," he said. "WIFA cannot operate a plant, WIFA cannot build a plant, WIFA cannot finance this on our own."

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# I-11 planning on hold as Federal Highway Administration reevaluates environmental impact

[kjzz.org/kjzz-news/2025-01-23/i-11-planning-on-hold-as-federal-highway-administration-reevaluates-environmental-impact](https://kjzz.org/kjzz-news/2025-01-23/i-11-planning-on-hold-as-federal-highway-administration-reevaluates-environmental-impact)

January 23, 2025

## [News](#)



NPS

Saguaro Cactus Forest in Saguaro National Park, outside of Tucson.

Foes of a plan to construct a new interstate highway — including a segment that could go through environmentally sensitive portions of Pima County — have won a temporary reprieve.

The Federal Highway Administration has agreed in a filing in federal court to reevaluate its environmental impact statement which found no problem with putting a segment of the proposed Interstate 11 through Avra Valley and an area adjacent to the Saguaro National Park or the Sonoran Desert National Monument. That now requires the agency to decide whether its original decision remains valid “or a supplemental or new analysis and new decision is needed.”

As part of the agreement with highway foes, the federal agency also will allow a 60-day public comment period after it has reached a decision.

More to the point, it has agreed to take no further action to advance planning work on the highway.

Russ McSpadden, the Southwest conservation advocate for the Center for Biological Diversity, one of the groups that filed suit in 2022 to block the highway, acknowledged that, strictly speaking, nothing in the agreement with the federal agency guarantees that it will eliminate what’s called the “west option” for the highway. But he said it is an important concession.

“Our lawsuit really pushed them to take a harder look,” he said. “They agreed to these terms.”

And even if the agency reaffirms the decision, McSpadden said the agreement would simply put the lawsuit back on track. And that still gives his group and other environmental interests a chance to convince U.S. District Court Judge John Hinderaker that he should block the west option.

It’s not just that corridor that is at stake: The challengers question the need for the entire 280-mile project from Nogales to Wickenburg. And they hope to kill it entirely.

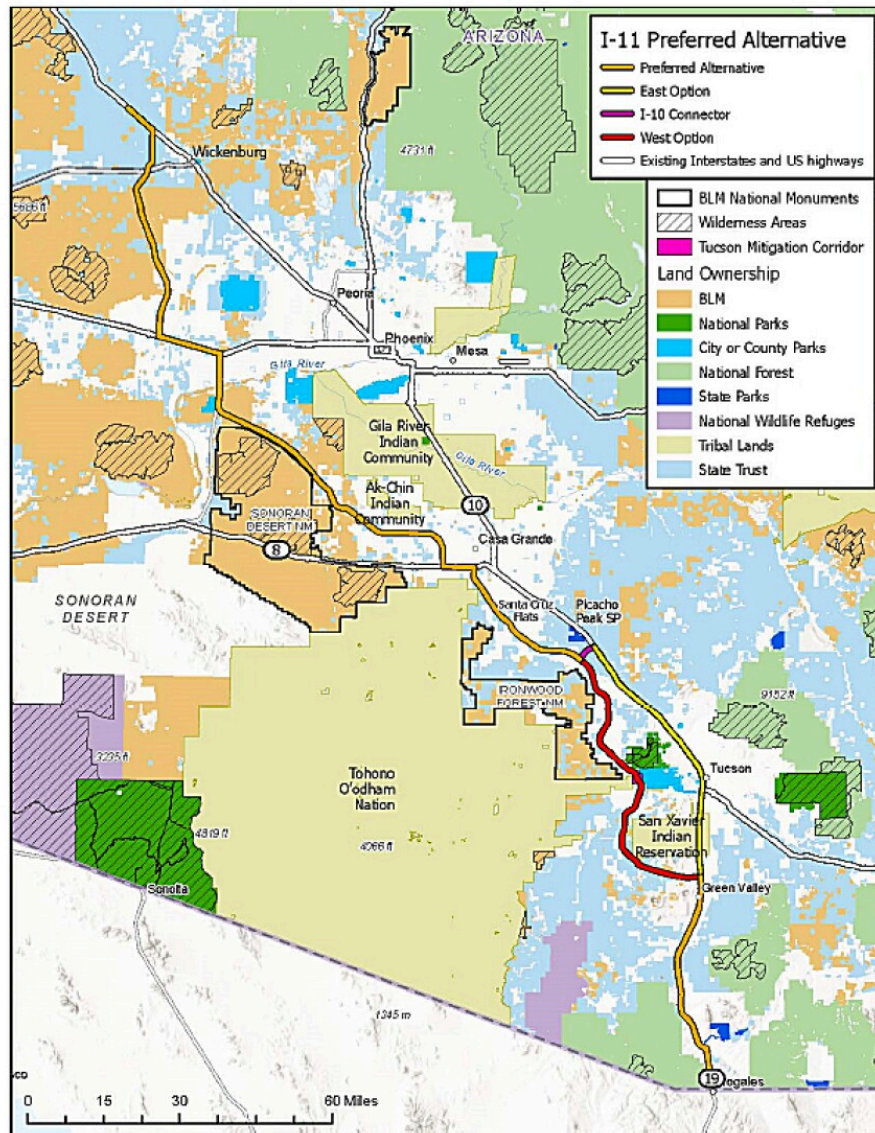
There was no immediate comment from either the Federal Highway Administration, which is conducting the studies, or the Arizona Department of Transportation, which has been promoting the new highway.

The federal agency already has said where they think most of the highway should go. But it has left undecided the path for routing the highway through — or around — Tucson.

One option is to co-locate I-11 along existing stretches of I-19 and I-10, at least through the area of Picacho Peak. At that point, a new highway would be built to the north and west.

But there also is the option that parts ways with I-19 north of Green Valley, with the road then heading west around the San Xavier Reservation and then cutting north near Tucson Mountain Park and Saguaro National Park.

It also runs directly through what’s known as the Tucson Mitigation Corridor. And that is a significant point in the litigation.



That corridor is not new. It actually goes as far back as the 1980s as part of the development of the Tucson leg of the Central Arizona Project.

Part of the reason for its creation was to minimize disruption to wildlife during aqueduct construction. But it also prohibits future development in the 4.25 square mile area to “preserve this fragile desert habitat from urbanization and maintain an open wildlife movement corridor.”

At one point, ADOT designed the west option as the “recommended alternative,” though agency officials have since insisted no final decision has been made.

ADOT and the Federal Highway Administration, which is providing funding, already tried to get the lawsuit thrown out of court without having to go to trial. They argued that litigation is premature and that no final decisions have been made on exactly where to place the new road.

But Hinkderaker, in a ruling last year, said that’s not what the evidence shows.

He said it is clear that the federal agency, which makes the initial determination, already concluded that neither the Ironwood Forest or Sonoran Desert national monuments qualified for special consideration under federal law that would require it to study whether the highway should be placed elsewhere. And he said there was no analysis done on the ecological impacts to Saguaro National Park or Tucson Mountain Park based on the agency's conclusion that neither property was a wildlife or waterfowl refuge.

With the new agreement, McSpadden said the federal agency will go back and do what challengers contend it should have done the first time around.

What it also requires, he said, is for the feds to publish their findings and then hear from the public.

"The west option is absolutely horrible," said McSpadden. "There's plenty more evidence that can be presented to Federal Highway and ADOT about this, including tribal concerns about impacts to cultural resources."

And Melissa Fratello, executive director of the Tucson Audubon Society, said there are the endangered and threatened species whose habitats would be disturbed or destroyed, including the cactus ferruginous pygmy owls, yellow-billed cuckoos, Yuma Ridgeway's rails and southwestern willow flycatchers.

"This project risks undermining decades of conservation work, including significant federal investment, to protect ecosystems that sustain wildlife, support local communities, and contribute to Arizona's unique identity and economy," she said in a prepared statement.

McSpadden said where the road goes isn't just a Pima County issue.

"Every Arizonan should be deeply concerned about the thinking of Federal Highway and ADOT here, that they would run a major interstate between a national park and a national monument and right smack through really culturally rich, archaeologically rich valley that's important to tribes," he said.

It isn't just the options of where the road is located in Southern Arizona that are at issue.

A stretch between Casa Grande and Buckeye also would affect recreation areas as well as habitats for various endangered species. And there are concerns in the lawsuit about environmental effects from the final stretch from Buckeye to Wickenburg.

The project, which eventually would run through Kingman and into Nevada, does have its proponents.

That has included support from local officials in Casa Grande and Maricopa who see it as aiding economic development.

# Arizona moves ahead with desal, other water supply projects

**T** [tucson.com/news/local/environment/article\\_54a52a53-f1c0-4e4d-96dc-2df1a40a64f2.html](https://tucson.com/news/local/environment/article_54a52a53-f1c0-4e4d-96dc-2df1a40a64f2.html)

Tony Davis

November 21, 2025



PHOENIX — Arizona will provide taxpayer money to help private companies develop plans for at least two and possibly three desalination plants in California or Mexico under proposals approved by a state agency's board.

The three projects are among seven that the board of the Water Infrastructure Finance Agency decided to move ahead on developing new water supplies for Arizona. In a series of 9-0 votes Wednesday, the board agreed to take a more detailed look at the proposals and to negotiate over how the agency and the companies involved would split costs for the studies and eventual development.

But while all seven are classified as water importation projects, only one would actually involve building pipelines or other facilities to convey water from other U.S. states and Mexico into Arizona as a way of enhancing this state's dwindling water supplies.

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The rest would involve Arizona working with a private company to build projects to desalinate seawater or treat wastewater for drinking, among other projects in those states and Mexico. Then, Arizona would exchange the rights to that new water with the other states and Mexico for a portion of their existing Colorado River supplies.

The board's action Wednesday marked the first time the authority publicly released details of the projects, which it previously kept under wraps due to what it said are confidentiality requirements in state procurement laws.

As he cast one of his "yes" votes on one of the projects, board member Buchanan Davis said, "This is a legitimate concept. It's a legitimate team of people working on it. And so now we are about to embark on a process to determine if it's a legitimate project, as we evaluate all the risks, political, financial and environmental. I'm excited that we have something we can realistically look at."

Environmentalists, however, are already raising concerns about these projects, with a Sierra Club official telling the board there are many unknowns about their environmental impacts, costs, energy use and long-term consequences for Arizona communities.



Arizona will provide taxpayer money to help private companies develop plans for at least two and possibly three desalination plants in California or Mexico under proposals approved by a state agency's board on Wednesday.

Here, the inside of a desalination plant in El Paso is shown.

Cedar Attanasio, Associated Press 2019

Together, the projects could bring the increasingly parched Arizona anywhere from a total of 427,000 to 1.641 million acre-feet a year, according to one-page summaries of each project the agency posted on its website. The higher figure amounts to as much or more water than the 336-mile-long Central Arizona Project was delivering to its customers annually in its peak years, before it started cutting its deliveries in 2022 due to declining flows on the Colorado River.

But it's unlikely the board would authorize spending money to build the 1.641 million acre-feet worth of water projects because that's far more than prospective water customers, municipal utilities and private companies, have said they'd be interested in paying for, said Ted Cooke, a retired CAP general manager who chairs the agency's long-term water augmentation committee.

"I won't say never but I doubt WIFA would ever build 1.6 million acre-feet of capacity," Cooke said, using a commonly used acronym for the state agency.

The proposals come more than three years after the Legislature passed legislation ordering the agency to find workable projects to import water from other states or countries. At the time, the Legislature and then-Gov. Doug Ducey pledged to appropriate \$1 billion over three years to cover

part of these plans' construction costs. But since then, the Legislature has not appropriated that much, and trimmed appropriations to less than \$400 million.

Cooke and other agency officials and board members stressed that the water garnered from the augmentation projects is not expected to compensate for all the cuts the state's cities and farms will have to take in CAP and other Colorado River-based water deliveries. The exact amount of those cuts will be determined once the seven Colorado River Basin states and the federal government settle on a plan to reduce their take of water from the depleted river.

Not every water user that wants to buy augmentation supplies is a contractor to buy Colorado River water, and "not every (Colorado River) contractor will want or be able to afford an augmentation supply," Cooke said at a briefing with reporters after the board meeting.

Chelsea McGuire, the agency's executive director, said that as someone once quipped, "There's no silver bullet for our water supply. There's only silver buckshot," meaning more than one new supply will be needed. The comment, from Kathryn Sorensen, a water researcher at ASU, came at the annual Colorado River Users Association in Las Vegas.

The projects' total construction and related development costs weren't shown in the summaries. Those costs will also be negotiated between the state agency and the companies making the proposals, agency officials said Wednesday. The agency's plan is to build these projects using "public private partnerships."

The board voted on four separate proposals, three from the large private water company Epcor and one from a partnership calling itself the Acciona-Fengate Water Augmentation Alliance. The Acciona proposal, however, actually combines four separate projects, including two desalination plants, into one proposal. Epcor's three proposals include a single desalination plant.

Specifically, the proposed projects include:

Separate desalination proposals by Acciona-Fengate in Mexico and Southern California. One proposal calls for building a new plant at a still undisclosed location in Mexico. Possible water supply: 50,000 to 250,000 acre-feet annually.

The other proposal calls for "creating new water supply for Arizona through existing or planned desalination facilities in California and Baja California," the proposal's summary said. Possible water supply: 150,000 acre-feet annually.

- Epcor proposes building a desal plant in Baja California, and a pipeline to deliver its water north to near the U.S.-Mexico border for it to be distributed and used within Mexico via the Colorado River. Possible water supply: 167,000 to 500,000 acre-feet a year.
- Acciona-Fengate proposes to build new and upgraded, modernized infrastructure to reduce water losses and conserve water on farmland in California, Mexico and Utah, with Arizona in turn getting shares of their Colorado River supplies. Possible water supply: 16,000 to 466,000 acre-feet annually.

- Epcor proposes to build a new plant to treat wastewater being collected and partially treated in Southern California to drinking quality for use in Mexico. Possible water supply: 14,000 to 95,000 acre feet a year.
- Acciona-Fengate proposes to reclaim and treat wastewater to drinking quality in Mexico and Colorado for use in those places. Possible water supply: 20,000 to 130,000 acre-feet per year.
- Epcor proposes to invest in storage and recover for drinking purposes what it calls "excess runoff water," presumably from irrigation to grow crops. Possible water supply: 10,000 to 100,000 acre-feet per year.

The board heard from three speakers representing a California tribe and conservation groups urging it to not approve a fifth proposal from Cadiz, a publicly traded company that wants to extract groundwater from a large aquifer in the Mojave Desert about 60 miles west of Parker, Arizona. Many opponents have blasted it as unsustainable groundwater "mining" that they say would drain an aquifer that's both sacred to the Chemehuevi tribe in California and used heavily by area wildlife.

But at the board meeting, members said over and over, as Chairman Jonathan Lines put it, that the Cadiz proposal is "off the table."

The earliest any of these supplies would be available is 2028, their proposals show, although most wouldn't be ready for delivery to Arizona until the early to mid-2030s.

At the meeting, Sierra Club official Jennifer Martin raised concerns about the proposals "after reviewing the limited materials available" on them.

"It is clear that these projects raise profound questions about cost, feasibility, environmental impacts, and long-term consequences for Arizona communities. Desalination in particular remains extraordinarily energy-intensive and expensive, with major brine-disposal and marine ecosystem risks. What we've seen about all of these proposals offers too few specifics to meaningfully evaluate their benefits or harms," Martin said.

The fundamental issue involving all the proposed projects is that they rely on "private, for-profit corporations exerting substantial control over Arizona's future water supply. That is not a path we should take lightly, or at all when the public bears the risk and corporations extract the profit," said Martin, an Arizona water program manager for the Sierra Club's Grand Canyon chapter.

Defending the use of public-private partnerships for these projects, board member Cooke said, "We need private equity to get this done, we need private expertise to get this done. WIFA cannot build plants, finance the plants and operate the plans on our own."

Summing up about the projects, McGuire told the board meeting, "These are real projects, this is no longer a hypothetical. This is no longer something that someone is dreaming of in a room somewhere.

"We are a critical piece of this puzzle. We will have a very large water supply gap without importation. It will take many, many solutions, many approaches," McGuire said.

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# Goodbye to the HOV lane as you know it—starting in October, Arizona will change its regulations for driving in these lanes with electric vehicles—here’s how it will affect you

 [unionrayo.com/en/hov-lane-change-regulations](https://unionrayo.com/en/hov-lane-change-regulations)

Laura M.

September 3, 2025



Goodbye to the HOV lane as you know it—starting in October, Arizona will change its regulations for driving in these lanes with electric vehicles—here's how it will affect you

## [Goodbye to the limits of creativity – the 10 most hated cars in the world – BMW, Nissan, Pontiac, and Tesla among them](#)

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## [Neither Honda nor Mazda – Toyota dominates in 2025 and consolidates its position as the world’s best-selling brand for this reason](#)

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## [No more blindly taking your car to the repair shop every time the warning light comes on—learning to read the Check Engine light changes the way you take care of your car in the United States](#)

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Arizona has decided to put an end to one of the privileges most valued by electric car drivers: starting September 30, [they will no longer be able to drive alone in the HOV lane](#). And if Congress does not say otherwise, this measure will extend to the rest of the country starting October 1. So remember that this change is not just local, it is nationwide.

All these years you could drive in the high-occupancy lane even if you were alone as long as you had an electric, but not anymore. Now, to be able to use those lanes in Arizona, you will need at least three people in the vehicle. Same as with any normal car.

### **Why this change?**

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Because those lanes, the HOV, were not invented to reward whoever had an electric car, but to reduce traffic jams and promote carpooling. What happened is that, with the boom of electrics, more and more people were benefiting from that rule. And the result was just the opposite of what was intended: the HOV lanes are getting saturated. So Arizona lawmakers have said enough.

### **Electrics are no longer a minority**

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In the last ten years, electrics and plug-in hybrids have gone from being a rarity to becoming a fairly common option. Sales have skyrocketed, the charging network has improved, and the idea of driving without polluting has taken hold with the population. But there are still two major brakes: the price and the lack of enough fast chargers. As long as that is not resolved, the transition will remain halfway...

### **More control across the country**

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Arizona is not alone in this, San Francisco, New York and other cities are going for more surveillance, automatic cameras and harsher penalties, because, only in 2023, a third of road deaths were due to speed issues.

The decision from Arizona does not come alone, it is part of a huge movement to rethink how traffic is organized. And that sometimes means taking away benefits that no longer make much sense.

## **And now what?**

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Many drivers bought their electric car partly for being able to use the HOV lane. In cities like Phoenix, where traffic jams are the daily bread, that meant an important time saving of at least half an hour... That is why this change is going to hurt. Because it forces you to look for alternatives: carpool, use public transport or put up with more time on the road.

## **Surviving the end of the HOV lane**

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The new rule does not have to be a drama for electric car drivers, relax, there are still several simple ways to adapt and continue enjoying the benefits of fast mobility. One of them is carpooling: share your trip with coworkers, friends or neighbors! It is easy and less boring, don't you think?

Another option is to plan trips better, avoiding peak hours, but we know that is very complicated, we know...

You should know there are mobility apps that offer solutions to organize shared trips. In the end, the goal is the same: fewer cars, more efficiency and more sustainable mobility.

## **A fair measure or a step back?**

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The debate is on, as always. Some believe that taking away this benefit is turning their back on those who bet on clean energy. Others think it was about time to recover the original sense of the HOV lane. The truth is that, with so many electrics on the road, keeping the exemption was no longer viable.

The big question now is what Congress will do. If it decides to extend the exception or if this change in Arizona is just the beginning of a new stage. One in which electric cars will no longer have exclusive advantages and will have to live under the same rules as the rest.