

Minority-owned businesses benefit from freeway work

AFN News Staff ahwatukee.com June 29, 2018

The South Mountain Freeway has been good for minority businesses, according to the Arizona Department of Transportation.

The state's most expensive highway project in history has awarded \$109 million in contracts as part of the \$1.7 billion project, it said in a release.

Those small businesses, run by socially and economically disadvantaged groups already have reaped more than ADOT's goal of \$108 million in contracts for such firms.

ADOT also said it's the most money awarded for a project since ADOT launched its Disadvantaged Business Enterprises Program in the 1980s to help qualifying small businesses compete for transportation contracts.

ADOT estimates about 1,200 certified minority businesses operate in Arizona. To qualify, they must be owned by individuals from socially and economically disadvantaged groups, including women and minorities.

"This program helps level the playing field for disadvantaged business enterprises in Arizona," said Rob Samour, ADOT's senior deputy state engineer for major projects. "And thanks to the efforts of Connect 202 Partners and these small businesses, we'll be able to deliver the South Mountain Freeway by late 2019 and provide much-needed traffic relief for Valley motorists."

To date, 90 construction contracts totaling \$84 million have been finalized with 71 disadvantaged business enterprises, all but two of them owned by Arizonans. These

contracts cover many essential tasks involved in building a freeway, including landscaping, rebar, painting, drainage, concrete and masonry.

An additional \$25 million has been awarded to disadvantaged business enterprises for work in design, quality control, public information and other professional services.

In 2016, ADOT finalized the state's first highway public-private partnership agreement with Connect 202 Partners, consisting of Fluor Enterprises Inc., Granite Construction Co. and Ames Construction Inc., with Parsons Brinckerhoff Inc. as the lead designer, for \$916 million to design and build the South Mountain Freeway.

Major construction of the 22-mile link between the W. 59th Avenue and Chandler interchanges on Interstate 10 started last year and the freeway is expected to open in late 2019.

ADOT also contends the freeway will benefit the economy generally by encouraging the development of new businesses and expansion of existing ones along much of its length, though probably not in Ahwatukee.