

Lemmon tramway study is rejected

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The Pima County Board of Supervisors turned down funding for a feasibility study of a proposed aerial tram to the top of Mount Lemmon on Tuesday.

The \$100,000 study would have determined if building a 5-mile-long tram would be possible.

Rafael Payan, Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation director, said the idea was presented to the board to see if it had any public support.

"Part of the process, and what we were really hoping for, was to bring this presentation to the public," Payan said. "We also needed to listen to the mountain, and the mountain and the public are saying this is not the right project."

As proposed, the tram would have resembled a large-scale ski lift with passengers riding in cars suspended from cables, rising a mile in elevation from Catalina State Park, on the mountains' west end, to Summerhaven.

"We were set to spend \$100,000 in taxpayer money when we already knew there were far too many negative impacts," said Democrat Richard Elias.

Concerns were that the project would scar the Catalina Mountains and harm views, the environment and the cultural significance of the mountains, Elias said.

Pleased with the board's decision and sharing many of Elias' concerns was Trevor Hare, a conservation biologist with the Sky Island Alliance.

"With growth in the Tucson area, it's important to keep the wild lands wild," Hare said. "They've floated this idea before, and it should have never been brought back up again."

Private funds and user-paid tram admission would have financed the project, Payan said.

"The project won't go anywhere," County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry said. "It had a long way to go uphill * it will continue to be out there festering."

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