

Everest road plan on hold

(AP) Plans to build a highway on the side of Mount Everest to ease the Olympic torch's journey to its peak have been put on hold, a TAR official has said. The project was to have turned a 108-kilometre track into a sealed highway that went from the foot of the mountain to a base camp at 5,200 metres (17,060 feet). *"The paved road project is on hold"*, Ju Jianhua, director of the TAR's Foreign Affairs Department, told AP, but he refused to give reasons for the delay or any other details. Zhang Tianhua, deputy director general of Tibet's Environmental Protection Bureau, said that workers were filling holes in the existing track, which was built in 1978, and were repairing portions that had been washed out. The new highway was to be a major route for tourists and mountaineers, and local officials had praised it as a way to make life easier for residents in the area. Taking the Olympic torch to the top of the mountain - seen by many as a way for Beijing to underscore its claim to Tibet - is expected to be one of the relay's highlights.

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