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Watchdog group urges ADOT to focus more on mass transit

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A watchdog group wants the Arizona Department of Transportation to reconsider a wish list that it sent to Congress.

ADOT sent the list to lawmakers to demonstrate how it could use some federal dollars from the next economic stimulus package.

Alex Norris with Arizona Public Interest Research Group said the list of projects is off-balance -- "about 70 percent roads, about 30 percent airports and under 1 percent to public transportation."

Nelson said PIRG would like to see a 50-50 split between road projects and public transportation funding.

"The reason for this is we want to be stepping in a direction of less oil consumption, less air pollution, better public health, more jobs and really be creating a 21st Century transportation infrastructure."

He added, "Public transportation investment actually creates 19 percent more jobs than the construction of new highways."

Public transportation also helps the environment by taking cars off the road, Nelson said.

"So those who are still choosing to drive are going to be dealing with fewer of their companions on the road because they'll be riding rails or buses or things like that."

Nelson said his group is pleased that ADOT made its wish list public because only 19 states did. He also said that PIRG hopes ADOT will revise its list and that Congress will provide some money to the states in the proposed second economic stimulus package.