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ADOT plans require \$1.3B

Wish list includes \$800M for roads

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JC AMBERLYN/Miner Interstate 40 over Holy Moses Wash west of Kingman is one of several stretches in Mohave County that ADOT hopes to repair with money from the Obama administration's stimulus plan.

submitted by 19 states' transportation departments, more than 75 percent of the money, or \$44.8 billion, would be allocated for road projects, with the rest going to public transit, aviation and bike and pedestrian projects.

But more than half of the submitted road projects would go toward new road construction and lane widening, while only 44 percent would go to rehabilitation, rehab and necessary maintenance - a move Arizona PIRG spokesman Alex Nelson said was counterproductive to the stimulus's intended purpose of creating new jobs and setting up a 21st-century mindset toward transportation.

"When the state takes on new road projects, they have to spend money on purchasing new land; and for every dollar that's spent on that, that's a dollar that's not spent on new jobs," Nelson said. "We feel it's important for Arizona to protect the investments it's already made before working on new investments."

Nelson admitted that, compared to some of the other 18 states' submissions, Arizona's is actually fairly reasonable. ADOT's road project submissions are split almost evenly, with \$432 million in new road construction and \$437 million in repair and maintenance projects.

By comparison, nearly all of Utah's \$7.8 billion wish list would go to new road construction, while the bulk of California, Colorado and Georgia's submissions would go to repairing existing infrastructure. Massachusetts' \$233 million wish list was the only one entirely dedicated to maintenance projects, a move the study said "demonstrate(s) that it is possible for states to spend on more effective and far-sighted projects."

Looking just at Arizona, Nelson noted that Mohave County's ADOT submissions were also all dedicated to

KINGMAN - The [Arizona Department of Transportation](#) has submitted a wish list of approximately \$1.3 billion in road, transit and aviation projects it hopes to receive funding for from the massive economic recovery plan unveiled by President-elect Barack Obama late last year.

But while the President-elect has stated his intention to invest the money in a modernized, 21st-century infrastructure, a new study released by the Arizona Public Interest Research Group suggests that many of the wish lists, Arizona's included, place far too much priority on new road construction while shortchanging the repair and rehabilitation of existing roads, and all but ignoring public transportation, despite increased public interest.

The study, conducted by the PIRG's senior analyst for tax and budget policy, Phineas Baxandall, found that of the more than \$58 billion in projects

existing road maintenance. Specifically, ADOT has requested \$72,026,000 for pavement preservation and bridge rehabilitation throughout the county, mostly along Interstate 40. It's a good start, Nelson said, but it also ignores a growing trend among state commuters who have been steadily warming up to public transportation - something almost completely absent from ADOT's wish list.

"What we're pretty critical of in terms to Mohave County is the lack of commitment in terms of public transportation projects," Nelson said. "Under 20 percent of rural Arizona's transportation needs are currently being met. Demand is going to increase, and there are no plans to increase that spending."

Less than 1 percent of ADOT's stimulus request is slated for public transportation projects, and of that, only \$870,000 is dedicated for Mohave County, specifically to fund a transit facility in Lake Havasu City.

This, Nelson said, comes despite a 3 percent increase in the number of passengers riding on Phoenix's Valley Metro transit system, as well as a dramatic drop in holiday driving brought about by last year's high gas prices.

"Arizonans are demanding more public transportation because it's more affordable, it creates more jobs and it's a lot cleaner," Nelson said.

"The allocation on this wish list is pretty low compared to the amount Arizona is spending on other transportation.

"It's just a step in the wrong direction," he concluded.

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