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Road funds should be protected

By *NEIL YOUNG/The Daily News*

BULLHEAD CITY - At the State Transportation Board meeting held Friday in Bullhead City, concern was expressed that fed funds for road projects could be raided to balance the state budget.

John McGee, ADOT chief financial officer, said \$300 million in ADOT funds has been “transferred” this year.

Arizona is set to receive \$4.2 billion from the Economic Recovery Act, signed into law Tuesday by President Barack Obama, million earmarked for “highway enhancements,” according to McGee.

Governors will have control over the Economic Recovery money. “We think that it’s dangerous when you give somebody \$4.2 billion with no checks and balances essentially,” said District 3 State Sen. Ron Gould, R-Lake Havasu City, in an interview with the Daily News.

Regarding the bailout funds earmarked for roads, “That wouldn’t be where I would go to look for money,” for the general fund, Gould said.

Richard Biegel, of Colorado Place, 2580 Highway 95, spoke in favor of ADOT making Riverview Drive an “alternate S.R. 95” which would qualify a Riverview bridge for ADOT funding. Biegel said he has a petition with 200 signatures endorsing the Riverview bridge which would ultimately connect Nevada to a future new 95 east of the current alignment, connecting Interstate 40 to Highway 95 in Bullhead City.

David Gaines, Laughlin/Bullhead International Airport director, addressed the board as a representative of the Arizona Airport Association. He said \$40 million has been swept from ADOT’s aviation fund over a three-year period.

His airport relies heavily on state match for grant funding, Gaines said.

The meeting was broadcast live on city-owned cable channel 4 and residents from all over the state were logging onto the city website to watch it, according to Steve Johnson, Bullhead City public information officer and channel 4 manager.