

ADOT: Project list 'a work in progress'

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State transportation officials cautioned Wednesday that a priority list of projects to receive federal stimulus funding "is still a work in progress."

But city of Yuma officials are hopeful the one local project on the list will stay there.

During its meeting Wednesday evening, the Yuma City Council lent its voice to that hope with passage of a resolution in support of the preliminary funding decisions by the ADOT board, both in February and earlier this week.

Those decisions first directed that half of the \$350 million in stimulus money coming to Arizona for highway projects go to the 13 rural counties, \$129 million go to Maricopa County and \$45 million go to Pima County, according to the state's long-standing formula for distributing highway funding.

The rural share of \$175 million is to be divided up among 27 projects, according to a preliminary ADOT appropriation. Of that, \$11.5 million is slated for the city of Yuma's planned improvements to 16th Street between Yuma Palms Regional Center and Arizona Avenue, to include the overpasses for Interstate 8 and the railroad but not the Arizona Avenue intersection, said Greg Hyland, city spokesman.

The 16th Street project is the only local project to make the list, said Lucy Shipp, local ADOT spokeswoman.

Initially, the ADOT "wish list" of roadway projects that would be eligible for federal funding included \$1.5 million for sign replacements along I-8 from milepost zero to milepost 19.

Shipp said as far as she knows at this time, that project is on the shelf.

"I think we put all our marbles on the 16th Street project," she said. "If it gets to there being a little extra money, who knows."

The ADOT board is scheduled to meet again March 13, at which time it is expected to finalize its appropriation list.

In the meantime, said Pat Patane, ADOT's Yuma District engineer, there's a scramble to meet the added requirements placed on the 16th Street project as a result of it now being a federal project. That includes an air conformity requirement. Another added requirement for a rail clearance was issued Wednesday by the Federal Highway Administration.

The city also is finalizing its right of way acquisition, Patane said. That involves one small parcel of land, he said, adding that the city did not have to purchase and demolish any buildings to widen the road to seven lanes.

In addition, the city is in the process of a water transmission line relocation as a precursor to

the road project.

Patane said he expects the roadway project could be ready to advertise for bids by May.

Besides added requirements, there are other complications of the project because of the stimulus funding, Hyland said.

For one thing, the state will now take an 8 percent oversight fee on top of the cost, Hyland said. And it is taking back \$2 million of the \$3 million it had already contributed toward the project, he said.

Originally, the total cost of the project was an estimated \$16 million. The \$11.5 million not only doesn't include the approximately \$5 million for the Arizona Avenue intersection, Hyland said, it falls short of the \$14.3 million now needed to complete the project.

"The project has become more expensive as a federal project," he said.

The remainder of the project's funding will have to come from local sources, he said. The hope is that the stimulus money will free up enough local money to either complete the 16th Street project or proceed with improvements to Avenue 3E from Gila Ridge Road to 32nd Street.

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