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## ADOT gets creative

*Funding deficit forces state transportation agency to create a new plan for the future*

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KINGMAN - Facing a potential loss of \$228 million for critical Arizona transportation projects, [Arizona Department of Transportation](#) Director Victor Mendez called for an innovative new approach for funding.

"Arizona is facing a transportation funding crisis that requires a shift in the way we think about growth and an innovative approach to invest in our future," Mendez wrote in a letter to State Transportation Board members. "Our current funding model cannot deliver the future transportation system necessary to keep Arizona competitive in a global economy, preserve our natural environment and offer the quality of life that our residents enjoy today.

"We are at a funding crossroads and must take action now to address our most critical transportation needs," Mendez added. "ADOT has worked diligently over the past six months to assemble a comprehensive Statewide Transportation Investment Strategy to address Arizona's rapid growth and the state's future transportation needs."

The strategy includes a balance of strategic highways, rail, public transportation, opportunities to preserve open space and wildlife connectivity, elements to support walkable/bikeable communities, and funding to help local governments meet local needs.

In Mohave County, the strategy encompasses more than \$1.4 billion in projects and programs. The projects include widening Interstate 40 to six lanes from the McConnico traffic interchange to the U.S. 93 south junction at an estimated cost of \$577 million.

In the plan, ADOT will spend an estimated \$68.5 million on strategic rail and transit projects and programs. The biggest amount of money would be spent on enhancing public transportation programs.

While \$145 million will be spent on local mobility projects and programs in the county, \$29.5 million in additional funds will be allocated for use in Kingman. Mohave County will also see \$17.9 million for transportation enhancement and walkable/bikeable communities, with Kingman receiving \$7 million additionally.

The State Transportation Board will host a series of four public hearings in June on the strategy. The soonest will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. on Wednesday in the Cline Library Assembly Hall at [Northern Arizona University](#) in Flagstaff.

The following three hearings will be in Marana, Phoenix and Tucson. For more information regarding the public hearings, go to [www.azdot.gov](http://www.azdot.gov).

"Projects in our five-year construction program and beyond have a better chance of being funded," said Michele E. Beggs, public information officer for ADOT. "Long-range projects could be adversely affected if our funding model isn't changed."

The Rattlesnake Wash interchange is currently on the tentative five-year program, Beggs said. It will go

before the State Transportation Board for approval at their June 20 meeting in Nogales.

"We don't expect that Rattlesnake Wash will be impacted," Beggs added.

The estimated shortfall comes following data released by the American Road and Transportation Builders Association, the Transportation Construction Coalition and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

The report says that without an influx of funding, the federal Highway Trust Fund will face a \$3.3 billion deficit over the fiscal year 2009. Beyond Arizona losing the \$228.4 million in lost federal funds, nearly 8,000 related jobs are expected to be eliminated as well.

Moneys from the Highway Trust Fund are generated primarily by gas taxes.

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