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ADOT director: State 'facing a transportation funding crisis'

PHOENIX - Without an influx of funding, the federal Highway Trust Fund will face a \$3.3 billion deficit over the coming year, translating into a potential loss of \$228 million for critical Arizona transportation projects.

In 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 potential impact to Arizona is made clear: \$228.4 million in lost federal funds and an estimated loss of nearly 8,000 related jobs.

Nationwide, the Highway Account of the federal Highway Trust Fund is projected to incur a \$3.3 billion deficit in fiscal year 2009. If not corrected, the shortfall would result in a \$13.5 billion cut in funding to the states, a 34 percent drop. The resulting job impacts are estimated to put 380,000 jobs in jeopardy, according to the groups releasing the data. Funds from the Highway Trust Fund, created in 1956, are generated primarily by gas taxes.

A congressional proposal presents a one-time funding fix for 2009. Long-term stability and an ability of current funding sources to meet Arizona's demands remain a concern, however.

The warning on funding matches comments made last week by Arizona Department of Transportation Director Victor Mendez, who told members of the State Transportation Board that the state will be unable to meet future demands for transportation improvements under current funding models without an innovative new approach.

"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. 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," he wrote in a letter to board members.

"We are at a funding crossroads and must take action now to address our most critical transportation needs," Mendez said. "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.

The Statewide Investment Strategy is available at: azdot.gov/Statewide_Transportation_Investment_Strategy/ More information on the national transportation funding crisis is available from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials at: transportation.org



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