

## Dwindling sales tax dollars crimp road projects

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West Valley road projects will get chopped or significantly pared down as the slumping economy has whittled away at sales tax dollars designated for transportation improvements.

Valley decision-makers have known for months that the bad economy has gutted Proposition 400, the 20-year half-cent transportation sales tax passed by Maricopa County voters in 2004.

Revenue for mass transit will be more than \$1 billion under what was projected when the tax passed, but the big hit will be taken by road and highway projects, which face a \$6.6 billion deficit.

To shave those billion, the Maricopa Association of Governments has compiled a list of what may be eliminated or cut, and West Valley officials received a clearer picture this week of how the economy may affect road work in the region.

For one, an entire freeway won't be built: state Route 801, from southwest Phoenix through Avondale into Goodyear. That will save \$1.8 billion, said Eric Anderson, transportation director for MAG, a regional planning organization that deals with transportation, air quality and a variety of other issues.

Closer to the Sun Cities, Anderson also said MAG is looking for a solution for the Grand Avenue and Loop 303 interchange, which would have cost an estimated \$200 million.

"We hope to find a cost-savings solution that would be around \$50 million," he said.

Other West Valley areas that may be affected:

- Reducing the \$760 million project for a traffic interchange at Interstate 10 and Loop 303.
- Delaying construction of Loop 303 south section between I-10 to Maricopa County 85, which would be a six lane freeway, from 2027 to 2030.

Jamsheed Mehta, transportation director for the city Glendale, said he understands the transportation budget must be cut, but hopes MAG makes sure those efforts are not only cost effective but safe for drivers.

"We just want to make sure it's safe for anyone involved," Mehta said.

Anderson said the MAG committee will vote July 15 on the final plan.