

It's too soon to entrust ADOT with \$42.6 billion

Jul. 26, 2008 12:00 AM

A gaggle of special interests calling itself the TIME Coalition is touting a \$42.6 billion tax increase to fund an undefined transportation program. To hear them tell it, the future of the state is dependent upon this expenditure of our money. However, this is a very questionable proposition.

Back in 2002, the Legislature enacted a law calling for the Arizona Department of Transportation to develop a series of performance measures - including in Arizona Revised Statutes 28-504 - a cost-per-person mile for transportation systems. There doesn't seem to be any evidence that ADOT has ever prepared any of the legally required performance measures in the six years since the law passed. If ADOT cannot be trusted to comply with a simple mandate for performance measures, why should ADOT be trusted to wisely spend the additional \$42.6 billion being requested under the proposed tax increase?

In the hearings that preceded the Legislature putting Proposition 400 on the 2004 ballot, taxpayers were promised that a performance audit of the first 20-mile light-rail line in Phoenix would be conducted before any more money was invested in expanding the system. Well, the first 20 miles

won't be operating until December. No performance audit is feasible until it is.

Yet, the Transportation and Infrastructure Moving Arizona's Economy Initiative has allocated over \$7 billion to passenger rail transportation. If the promises made in support of 2004's tax increase are worthless, why should we have any confidence in the promises made in this new investment strategy?

Word is that ADOT has awarded a \$5 million consulting contract to develop a statewide transportation plan. However, this plan won't be finished until sometime next year. Wouldn't it make more sense to have the vote on the tax come after this plan is completed?

Since the TIME Initiative is multimodal - involving roads, buses and two types of trains - wouldn't it be instructive to know the relative cost-effectiveness we should expect to see from each of these alternatives?

Despite having a legal obligation to provide a sound foundation for transportation plans, ADOT hasn't answered any of these questions. Instead, its director is touting a so-called "Statewide Transportation Investment Strategy" that is nothing more than a "wish-list" concocted by political insiders. It is the flimsiest basis for a transportation proposition ever placed before Arizona's voters.

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Until ADOT has answered these questions and lived up to its legal obligations, I think voters would be very foolish to entrust this agency with over \$42 billion in higher taxes.



The writer, who lives in Paradise Valley, is a founder of the International Conservative Authors Network and was an opponent of Proposition 400, a ballot measure in 2004 that extended the Valley's transportation tax.

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