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### Maricopa Top Stories

## TIME plan axed from ballot- Maricopa projects in limbo; legal challenge promised

By ADAM GAUB, Managing Editor

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**ADOT Director Victor Mendez, seen here speaking at a Pinal Partnership meeting in June, has been one of the major backers of a TIME Coalition initiative that would provide a 30-year transportation plan for the state, via a one-cent sales tax increase. TTME's ballot measure was ruled invalid this week by Secretary of State Jan Brewer due to a lack of valid signatures.**



Adam Gaub/Maricopa Monitor

After weeks of behind-the-scenes wrangling and negotiating, the hope for taxpayer-approved funds for a pair of projects on Arizona 347 may be all for naught.

Arizona Secretary of State Jan Brewer announced Monday that the TIME Coalition's initiative to place a statewide transportation plan and accompanying one-cent sales tax increase on the November ballot had come up short on signatures. Despite submitting 260,698 signatures earlier this summer, TIME - "Transportation and Infrastructure Moving Arizona's Economy" - had 122,247 signatures deemed invalid, leaving them just less than 15,000 short of the minimum.

"I am very surprised that a ballot measure ended up with over 42 percent of its signatures being invalid," said Brewer, a Republican. "That is among the largest overall invalid rates that I can recall ever seeing from a citizens initiative drive."

The plan - produced by a bi-partisan commission of private sector leaders and

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politicians - is backed heavily by Democrats, including Democratic Gov. Janet Napolitano. The transportation initiative provided a road map for transportation planning across the state spread out over a 30-year time span.

Maricopa, which saw a widening project for Arizona 347 and an overpass at the Union Pacific Railroad crossing go from being off the list of projects to heavily funded by the time the report was finalized, stands much to lose if a potential legal challenge of the decision is unsuccessful.

Both the governor's office and TIME representatives told the Associated Press this week that Brewer's decision would not be the final card played in this battle.

"We will get to look at the petition signatures that they counted invalid, and we will get to build a case on why some or all of those should be considered valid," TIME deputy campaign manager Katie Hutchinson told the AP.

Despite recent polls showing mixed support for the plan from the small business community across the state, Maricopa's City Council had signaled their unanimous backing of the plan in July with a letter of support.

On July 24, Brewer's office reported that TIME had 238,874 signatures still eligible after removing 21,824 signatures. Random samples of 5 percent of signatures were then processed by the county recorders to verify voter registration and petition signatures. That process removed another 100,423 signatures as being invalid, the Secretary of State reported in a media release.

Brewer said the collection process itself may have been flawed from the beginning.

"Paying circulators by the signature invites fraud and too often leads to unnecessary errors," Brewer said. "It remains to be seen what the reasons were for the high rate of invalid signatures in this matter."

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