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ADOT asking public for input on state transportation plan

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Wick News Service

The Arizona Department of Transportation is inviting Cochise County residents to help shape the future of transportation in Arizona by participating in a community workshop in Sierra Vista on Tuesday, Nov. 18

The workshop will be held twice that day at the Windemere Hotel, 2047 S. Highway 92. The first session is from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. and the second session from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

ADOT began the Statewide Transportation Planning Study in early 2008 to focus on a long-range vision of transportation needs in Arizona.

Bill Harmon, ADOT's District Supervisor in Safford, made a presentation recently to the Willcox City Council.

He invited council members and interested members of the public to attend the upcoming workshops.

This study is also known as "Building a Quality Arizona" and "looks at the long term - 50 years," Harmon said.

He talked about ADOT's commitment to Arizona during his power point presentation.

"We understand that transportation is personal and important to quality of life," said Harmon, adding that about 4,500 professionals live and work here, too.

"Our job is to serve you with an excellent transportation system," he said. "We are committed to providing you with a comprehensive and cohesive statewide network that will help you get around more easily."

"We know that decisions we make now have impact far into the future; we care about the legacy we will leave for future generations."

How far into the future? The study focuses on the year 2050.

Harmon explained what it means, "to build a quality Arizona."

"We look at actual needs, not just what we think we can afford — traditional planning is fiscally constrained."

He said that ADOT considers “the relationships between land use, economic vitality, and transportation;” “with our partners and the public around the state for a collaborative vision that reflects our values as Ari

“We think carefully about what type of lifestyle we want to create and what kind of legacy we want to le: generations.”

Harmon then addressed the state’s “transportation reality.”

Construction costs are up 60-percent over the last five years in Arizona and the cost of fuel are increasing Harmon said.

In addition, federal and state fuel tax value is steadily eroding and federal transportation funding is expiri

“We are looking at ADOT’s only being able to do maintenance outside Maricopa and Pima (County) are:

“No longer will we be able to build bridges such as the 340 interchange here in Willcox.”

Talking about the state’s potential for growth, Harmon said, “Arizona will continue to grow and so will i: transportation.”

With the population of Arizona’s growth areas at 5.1 million in 2005, “the 2050 projection estimate is 14 people in our state,” he said.

Another point Harmon made is that a large amount of imports from major California ports pass through / rest of the United States, with Interstates 8, 10, and 40 handling the heavy truck traffic.

The study is composed of four Regional Framework Studies: Northern, Western, Central and Eastern Ari

Each Regional Framework Study looks at ways to plan for growth, understand community development : patterns, and be prepared for future transportation needs.

Harmon gave an overview of the process, which is to gather from the community issues and ideas; devel: compare scenarios based on the values expressed; present scenarios to the public and ask for feedback (n: November); and merge feedback into one overall recommendation.

Smart Growth Planning Principles have to be considered and will be discussed in the community worksh

These principles are:

Mix land uses

Take advantage of existing community assets

Create a range of housing opportunities and choices

Promote distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place

Strengthen and encourage growth in existing communities

Foster walk able neighborhoods

Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas

Provide a variety of transportation choices

Make development decisions consistent, socially equitable, and cost-effective

Encourage citizen and stakeholder participation in development decisions

Harmon said that we are in a critical point in the process.

“Come and review the ideas that we have developed and give us your thoughts,” he said.

“Participation is crucial at the open houses as we think about our future,” Harmon said. “Arizona is in a critical moment for transportation; we have the ability now to design our future together. This is the time to get involved.”

For more information, visit www.bqaz.gov.