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News

ADOT seeks public input Community workshop slated for Tuesday

By Tony Waggoner

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Lake Havasu City residents will have their shot at voicing concerns and gathering information about Arizona's highways Tuesday with Arizona Department of Transportation's Frameworks Transportation Community Workshops.

ADOT will have engineers and spokespeople on hand talking about upcoming projects and where the future lies for state highways, as part of their "Building Quality of Arizona" framework planning process.

ADOT wants to make sure residents' voices are heard, and they are going from city-to-city statewide.

"Every comment is documented," ADOT Public Information Officer Michelle Beggs said. "We are inviting communities statewide to decide future transportation ideas."

Beggs said a major concern for ADOT is how they would manage transportation needs with the state's increasing growth. ADOT is not necessarily just looking at the near future as much as they are looking long-term down the line.

"Our economic condition makes a stronger call for smarter growth," Beggs said.

Previous participants of public ADOT meetings agreed the current highway infrastructure is not keeping pace with the growth of the state. ADOT is seeking suggestions from the public on how they would deal with this to keep ahead of the curve.

Population growth would likely lead to further congestion. An ADOT study revealed by 2050, it could take drivers from Lake Havasu City more than five hours to get to Yuma. That is almost two hours longer than it takes now.

Beggs noted ADOT has considered a number of transportation options based upon Arizonans' feedback.

One such option is multi-modal transportation, which would bring together transportation planning with land use, business development planning and right-of-way acquisition.

Mass transit or "park and ride" could be a viable option to save Arizonans time, but funding is an obvious question. Beggs said she expects residents to have questions about how projects would be funded, where funding would come from and what it would cost taxpayers.

Alternative public transportation could play a big role. With gas prices still relatively high, compared with the current economy, more and more citizens are choosing bus travel. Beggs said ADOT has considered the need an alternative to highways connecting cities statewide.

Though this saves riders from paying for gas, most buses in Arizona use diesel fuel, which can be extremely expensive. Beggs spoke of alternative fuel options as something ADOT would like to hear about from the public.

"We would like to show a significant build on new technologies to make alternative fuels more affordable," she said.

Many of ADOT's current projects are funded through Federal grants. With budget cutbacks all across the board, it is difficult to know where ADOT will be going in the current economic climate.

ADOT has several projects currently on the board for highways in and around Lake Havasu City.

The most visible of those projects is the State Route 95 landscaping between Mesquite and Swanson Avenues. Beggs said ADOT is meeting with design consulting firm HDR Consulting next week to discuss the final design details of the project. Advertisements for construction bids are expected to go out sometime later this month. The project is expected to begin sometime in 2009.

Also on the agenda are deck repairs to the Bill Williams Bridge. Portions of the bridge were damaged in 2006, when a semi-truck hauling diesel fuel overturned, exploded and caught fire. Beggs said the project should be advertised for construction bids in April 2009. ADOT is hoping for work to begin by mid-summer 2009.

ADOT's biggest upcoming project will be to widen lanes near the Hoover Dam. Beggs said they expect the project to be complete by the time the Hoover Bypass Bridge is complete in 2010. Construction on widening the roadways near Hoover Dam should begin in January 2009.

The workshops in Lake Havasu City will take place Tuesday at Mohave Community College Room 600. There are two workshops. One is from 1:30 to 4 p.m. The other is from 6 to 8:30 p.m.

You may contact the reporter at twaggoner@havasunews.com.

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