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Transportation master plan in the making

Committee workshop in Bullhead City; residents asked for input

By NEIL YOUNG/The Daily News

BULLHEAD CITY - At two Western Region Framework Study Committee workshops Monday, Bullhead City-area residents asked to project 42 years ahead and imagine what Mohave and La Paz counties' transportation needs will be in 2030-2050 time

It's part of Building a Quality Arizona - a statewide study, region by region, that includes transportation alternatives and integrates with environmental concerns and economic planning and development.

Participating in the dialogue are regional transportation planning entities, transit organizations, tribal governments, land management agencies, conservation groups, business and community leaders, the Governor's office and the Arizona Department of Transportation.

A fact sheet lists questions the framework studies will seek to answer:

What part can transportation investments play in encouraging quality economic growth?

- How can we improve the links and relationship between land use and transportation to achieve responsible urban growth patterns following the principles of smart growth and sustainability?

- How can we improve links between population centers, which will strengthen the base for economic growth?

- How can transportation decisions enhance our quality of life and improve our natural environment in a way that is fair and equitable for Arizonans?

Scott Omer, from transportation consultant PB America, said the state's population in 2050 is expected to be 14-15 million, more than double the current 6 million. A population corridor will stretch from Nogales, through Tucson and Phoenix, all the way to Flagstaff. Another corridor will run from Kingman to Bullhead City, with the exception of an unpopulated area around Union Pass on Highway 89.

Omer said it will take five hours to drive from Phoenix to Flagstaff in 2050. It takes about two hours now.

He presented three scenarios for 2050. Each addresses "smart growth" principles, but to varying levels.

Scenario A assumes people will continue to drive their own vehicles as their primary mode of transportation. Transportation patterns and infrastructure would be similar to today, but would include significant transit improvements.

Newer technology will provide clean, affordable and abundant fuels for personal vehicles. Interstate 40 would be widened to ten lanes.

Scenario B shifts the focus from personal vehicles to a heavier emphasis on public transportation, walking and bicycling. Personal vehicles would remain an important mode of transportation. A railroad may run from southern to northern Arizona.

Scenario C concentrates on focused growth with denser populations to steer people away from an automobile-dependent lifestyle. Even in this case, it's anticipated that the personal vehicle would continue to be the primary travel choice.

Bullhead City Mayor Jack Hakim asked Omer why the scenarios have no funding mechanisms. Omer said they want to first identify the needs and then find the funding.

needs and then determine how much it will cost to provide those needs.

The meeting attendees were broken into two groups to provide feedback on the scenarios. Thoughts expressed included the be not enough population in this area for a light commuter rail, like the one recently developed for metro Phoenix.

Densely populated communities were seen as working better for cities like Phoenix and Tucson and not as well in this area.

Steve Latoski, Mohave County public works engineer, predicted “personal choice” will come “at a greater cost” by mid-centu

Recommendations for a statewide transportation master plan will be presented next spring.